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Gouvernement
Publications



No. 255A

N° 255A

ISSN 1180-2987

**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

First Session, 36th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Première session, 36^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Wednesday 3 December 1997

Mercredi 3 décembre 1997



Speaker
Honourable Chris Stockwell

Président
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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Hansard Reporting Service
3330 Whitney Block, 99 Wellesley St W
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Telephone 416-325-7400; fax 416-325-7430
Published by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario



Service du Journal des débats
3330 Édifice Whitney ; 99, rue Wellesley ouest
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Téléphone, 416-325-7400 ; télécopieur, 416-325-7430
Publié par l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 3 December 1997

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 3 décembre 1997

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ALGOMA STEEL CORP

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): Yesterday at 6 pm Algoma Steel announced the closure of the iron ore division at Wawa. The community's worst fears were realized by this announcement. In this community of 4,200 people, 220 employees face the choice of uprooting and transferring to Sault Ste Marie or losing employment.

The loss of 220 good jobs in Wawa has devastating effects on this small community. The town will lose about 15% of its direct employment, with the inevitable spinoffs through the broader business community. To put this in perspective, Toronto would have to face the loss of nearly a quarter of a million jobs.

In addition, the community will lose a sizeable assessment at the mine from this closure. Presently the community faces a net downloading cost from the province of in excess of \$1.5 million. Without provincial assistance, the community will just have to turn over the keys to Premier Harris.

I call on the Minister of Northern Development to immediately and personally go to Wawa to meet with community leaders, to personally assure the community of his support and to provide a significant commitment to the people of Wawa and northern communities.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): As was just indicated, Algoma Steel announced late yesterday afternoon the complete cessation of the operations of Algoma Ore division, the main employer in the community, in June 1998.

Algoma Ore division is the backbone of the economy of Wawa and region. This is devastating for the 220 employees, the business community and the community as a whole.

Algoma Ore employees are very competitive. They've improved their productivity substantially over the years. It's true that Algoma Steel is offering them jobs in Sault Ste Marie, but the real estate market in the community and the retail business sector will be seriously hurt by this announcement. Six months is not enough for the town to adjust.

Algoma Steel has stated that it is committed to working with the community of Wawa and the provincial and

federal governments in determining the ways in which the community can be assisted in dealing with the impacts of the closure. It's time for the Conservative government here and the federal Liberal government to make a similar commitment to the one the NDP government made in 1992, when we were faced with the downsizing of Algoma Steel. We worked to preserve the AOD operation. We obtained a Jager Strandboard plant for Wawa, employing 150 people. If we could do that as a government, this Conservative provincial government should be committed to economic development and economic diversification for the Wawa region as well.

SANTA ON WHEELS

Mr Jim Brown (Scarborough West): I'm pleased to rise today and call the attention of all the members of this House to an excellent charity, Santa on Wheels. Metro Toronto Chairman Alan Tonks and I launched the program at the Toronto Eaton Centre last Thursday, and I held a Scarborough launch at the Scarborough Town Centre the following day.

Santa on Wheels provides toys and gifts to needy children over the holiday season. The program was started by Bell Canada and Nortel telephone pioneers to help children in families that are struggling.

Bell employees and retirees donate their own time to this cause. There are drop boxes at Bell phone centres where people can donate toys and gifts. The program is in its second year, and this is the first year that the donation boxes will be in all the phone centres in the 416 area code.

The gifts will go to families living in Metro Toronto hostels. I'll be delivering gifts to the Scarborough family hostels.

I would ask all the members of the Legislature to throw their full support behind this excellent program in their own ridings. I would further encourage anyone who has a little extra this year to make a donation for somebody who is struggling over the holidays. There are 758 children and 650 adults in Metro Toronto hostels. I ask everyone to do what they can to help the Santa on Wheels program and try to provide a merry Christmas for needy kids and families.

WATER QUALITY

Mr Frank Micalash (Kenora): My statement is directed to the Minister of the Environment. As you are aware, the residents of Sioux Lookout have been under a

"boil water" advisory since April 1997. The reason for the advisory, as the minister is well aware, is the large amount of bacteria in the water.

In response to my September 15 question on this issue, you stated: "The ministry is now going through several applications by municipalities across the province and we will be prioritizing those with regard to which ones are in most urgent need. I expect the decisions with regard to the funding to be made in the very near future."

Now that you have had almost three months to study the applications, my constituents in Sioux Lookout, along with the mayor and council, want to know how much longer they will have to wait for your funding announcement to be made in regard to this filtration plant. Unlike most communities that are experiencing water problems, Sioux Lookout's water supply is contaminated by not one but two parasites. They need this government's and the minister's immediate attention to solve the issue.

Again, Minister, let me remind you of your commitment in this House to the Sioux Lookout residents and council on September 15 that decisions would be made "in the very near future." As I have said on many occasions, most communities in this province take access to clean water for granted. Why should the residents of Sioux Lookout be any different?

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF DISABLED PERSONS

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): Today we celebrate the International Day of Disabled Persons, but unfortunately it's not much of a celebration here in the province of Ontario. Mike Harris promised in the Common Sense Revolution, "Aid to seniors and the disabled will not be cut." That's a broken promise. Programs have been cut, supports have been eroded and laws have been repealed.

While Bill 160 has been in the spotlight lately, another couple of bills were slipped through, bills that have a tremendous impact on the disabled community yet did not have the attention because we were all captivated in the province with the dispute around education.

Is it any wonder that Mike Harris is hiding some of these things? Let's take a look at Bill 96, the end, the death of rent controls. That has tremendous impact for the disabled community. There's also the Ontario Disability Support Program Act, some aspects of which I've been very clear that I support and think are good, but there are aspects in there which give bureaucrats the power to determine disabled persons incapable of dealing with their own affairs, without going through due process, and also aspects that allow disabled persons to be fingerprinted.

What about the promise for the Ontarians With Disabilities Act? The Premier promised that. It is nowhere on the legislative agenda. When I asked him last year what he had to say to the disabled community, he said, "Sorry, but we're going to do it." The new minister has refused to meet with the disabled community on this. I call

on the government to at least live up to that promise. Pass the Ontarians With Disabilities Act.

DURHAM REGIONAL POLICE SERVICE WEB SITE

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): I wish to congratulate the new chief of the Durham Regional Police Service, Kevin McAlpine, and his staff for their initiative in becoming the first police service in Canada to use the Internet to receive crime reports from victims.

This user-friendly site was designed by Constable Leon Presner of Durham Regional Police Service. He is continuing to develop the Web page so that the information is safe and secure. An important aspect of this new service on the Net is that there will be a Web page dedicated to victim outreach, with a psychologist on board. As well, all groups, from teens to seniors, are encouraged to write on issues of importance to them personally. Also accepted on the site will be reports of lost-and-found and missing articles.

There are many advantages of this new policing service. For instance:

- (1) More accessibility to police services, with opportunities for growth.
- (2) Police officers will have more time to be on the road to deal with higher-priority calls.
- (3) Costs are low, approximately \$400 for startup.

To access the new Durham Regional Police Service Web site, call up www.police.durham.on.ca.

I commend the efforts of the Durham Regional Police Service in finding new and inventive ways of providing enhanced and better service —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you.

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FARM PRACTICES PROTECTION

Mr Pat Hoy (Essex-Kent): Over the last few weeks we have seen this government rush to push its contentious legislation through the Legislature as quickly as possible. While they cannot move quickly enough to steamroll public opinion, they drag their feet when it comes to legislation that has wide public support.

On June 26, the Minister of Agriculture introduced Bill 146, the Farming and Food Production Protection Act. This act is intended to update existing legislation which governs farming practices in Ontario. The act was brought forward for second reading on September 24, and after receiving minimal debate it was shelved in favour of other legislation.

The question is, why? Our caucus agreed to facilitate the passage of this bill and we have seen in the past that the government has nothing against the prompt passage of legislation. So what's the problem? Why does the minister not continue with second reading of Bill 146?

Many of the new amalgamated municipalities, which include rural and urban areas, are eager to see this

legislation pass before January 1, 1998. The minister should be getting pressure from his own caucus. I suggest he bring the legislation back to the House so we can discuss issues surrounding this bill. We see no reason for delay and urge the minister to bring this back so we can pass it by year's end. Minister, get your House leader on side today.

BOYS AND GIRLS CLUBS

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): Recently I was pleased to have the opportunity to attend the annual Boys and Girls Clubs scholarship awards presentations.

Boys and Girls Clubs of Ontario believe that every kid has potential. Knowing the rising costs of post-secondary education and the financial challenges faced by many of our young people, the Boys and Girls Clubs of Ontario started a scholarship program in 1992. To date, over \$140,000 has been given out to 136 youth across Ontario who are striving to achieve their potential.

This has taken place through the help of many private corporate donors and certainly some public institutions like the Toronto Raptors Foundation and the Blue Jays Charitable Foundation.

I want to particularly note today, among the recipients for this year, four people who are active residents in the riding of Dovercourt. They are:

Connie LaRusso, who has been a member of the Dovercourt Boys and Girls Club for 10 years. She's currently in her third year of the sociology and law and society program at York University.

Telly Russo is studying logistics management at George Brown College. He has been part of the Dovercourt club for 14 years.

Anna Maria DiPaolo is enrolled in the general arts program at York University, with the goal of teaching in the future. She has been an active part of the Dovercourt club for 11 years.

Steven Svarnas has been with the St Alban's club for 12 years. He is currently in year four of the kinesiology and health sciences program at York University.

To them and to the rest of the recipients this year and to the Boys and Girls Club movement, my congratulations and thanks for the good work they continue to do.

RED TAPE REVIEW COMMISSION

Mr Frank Sheehan (Lincoln): I rise today to talk about an important commitment this government made to the people of Ontario in its effort to create jobs. I'm speaking about the elimination of red tape.

Government red tape and unnecessary regulations have burdened this province for far too long, resulting in barriers to job creation, slowing the province's economic growth and increasing public frustration.

Statistics show that job creation and business productivity are significantly affected by red tape. According to the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, 43% of

the firms spent more than six hours a week and 17% spent more than 10 hours a week on government paperwork.

This government began the process of identifying and eliminating red tape with the establishment of the Red Tape Review Commission in 1995. It was my good fortune to be made its chairman, one of the most significant jobs outside of cabinet.

We would never have gotten to where we are today without the dedicated involvement of my colleagues and our external advisory committee.

I'm proud of the progress the government and our commission have achieved, first in identifying the problem; second, in designing a process to deal with it. The government has responded to our recommendations, first, by extending our mandate; second, by implementing a regulatory impact and competitiveness test; third, by referring all regulatory policies to the commission for prior approval.

There's more red tape to be found and cut. We're determined to do it. It is a pleasure to inform you that the Red Tape Commission continues its efforts and will be looking to everyone, both inside and outside government, to help us identify red tape. Our efforts are supported by groups such as CFIB, the Council of Universities —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you.

WEARING OF RED RIBBONS

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I request unanimous consent that we be allowed to wear red ribbons in regard to AIDS Awareness Week for today and tomorrow.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): That's today and tomorrow. Agreed? Agreed.

CONSIDERATION OF LEGISLATION

Ms Annamarie Castrilli (Downsview): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: If I might, I just want to speak to the point of order originally raised by the member for Algoma and the member for Fort William.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Just a second on that, and I will come right back to you.

Members of the House, the member for Downsview and others, there comes a point when I've got to say, "Okay, I've had enough submissions." Even if I ask you to put it in writing, you're going to give it to me in writing, and that means I've got to stop the process and read that submission. I have in fact investigated, checked with the authorities, gone through the whole process, and I'm going to render a decision.

I really hate to tell anyone they can't submit any more, but by submitting, the process again is I've got to review your submission. If you really believe that at this time your submission is offering me any information that's truly germane and new to the submissions that have been previously offered, then I will hear it. But quite frankly, I can't imagine that there's anything you're going to offer at

this time that I myself and the staff and all those others who have submitted haven't offered.

Ms Castrilli: Thank you, Speaker. The reason I rose on a point of order was not to repeat old ground. It's related directly to the submission that the government House leader forwarded to you, which I've had an opportunity to review. It's in response to that, and I think you might find the point. I will be brief and I will make very few points.

The Speaker: Okay. I'm not going to turn the submission down, but again I'll have to take this into account and report back at the earliest convenience.

Ms Castrilli: As I indicated at the outset, I will be very brief. I will be responding to the submissions of the government House leader, pointing out a number of the submissions that were made there and responding to them.

The first is the government's contention that standing order 51 is to be limited only to motions, and they point to the proposition that standing order 51 appears in part XI of the standing orders dealing with motions.

I'd just like to point out to you, and I won't repeat the standing order to you because I'm sure you're very familiar with it, that the government in its own submission admits that bills are proceeded with by way of motion for each of the three readings, and indeed in committee with amendments. I submit to you that this is conclusive evidence that standing order 51 is indeed applicable to this question.

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The second contention of the government is that standing order 51 is in conflict with section 3 of the Statutes Act. Again, I won't read section 3 of the Statutes Act. I imagine you know it quite well by now. What I would say to you is that this assertion is not applicable in this case.

Section 3 clearly refers to an act, and Bills 160 and 149, I submit to you, are not acts in our parliamentary or legislative procedures. I refer you to Black's Law Dictionary, the fifth edition, at page 24, which distinguishes between a bill and an act as follows, and if you don't mind, Speaker, I will read that to you:

"When introduced into the first House of the Legislature a piece of proposed legislation is known as a bill. When it is passed to the next House it may then be referred to as an act. After enactment," which is the particular case here, "the terms 'law' and 'act' may be used interchangeably."

In other words, an act is a law, not a bill, and therefore section 3 of the Statutes Act cannot refer to either Bills 149 or 160 that are before us.

The third submission of the government is that the bills in question do not deal with substantially the same subject matter and therefore can proceed simultaneously in this Legislature. I think the parliamentary procedure is clear that you cannot proceed with two similar bills in the Legislature, and the House of Commons decision in 1968 on the Income Tax Act is proof of that proposition.

The members for Fort William and Algoma have already amply demonstrated that sections of Bill 149 and

Bill 160 do in fact deal with the same subject matter. I will not repeat those arguments, but the bill ought to be ruled out of order on the basis of those submissions.

The fourth contention of the government is that the motion for second reading —

The Speaker: Order, members. If you're having a meeting, could I ask that you have the meeting out in the lobbies, please. I would like to hear the submission.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Member for St Catharines-Brock. Thank you.

Ms Castrilli: The government's fourth contention is, "A motion for second reading of Bill 164 is not a motion to amend Bill 149" — and I'm quoting directly from their text.

The Speaker: It's not difficult, folks. It's not that difficult at all. If you want to meet, go meet in the lobbies.

Ms Castrilli: I will read from the government's submission as follows: "A motion for second reading of Bill 164 is not a motion to amend Bill 149, though the effect of passing Bill 164 will be to make such amendments to the law if Bill 149 receives royal assent." I submit to you, Speaker, that the effect of the government's amendments is the same as if they had amended the bill. The government is attempting to do through the back door what it could not do through the front door because of its own time allocation motion.

Finally, the government has acted recklessly. It has acted without thinking. They have established rules which they themselves cannot follow. They cannot respect their own time allocation motion, which is why we find ourselves in the situation we are in at this moment.

Speaker, I need not remind you that in an earlier ruling you indicated that privileges of the members of this House could be abridged by a time allocation motion. I ask you now to ensure that the government respect those very time allocation motions they have put in place. For these reasons, the government's submission is ill considered and I ask you to consider the bill out of order.

The Speaker: I will take those submissions, as well as the others, and certainly report back at the earliest possible time.

Are you standing on a point of order?

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): Yes.

The Speaker: I assume it's what I have in my hand. No. It's on a different one?

Mr Wildman: On this one. I just wanted to make the point that the member for Downsview has given additional information which basically supports the position taken by myself and by the member for Fort William in terms of the application of standing order 51 with regard to Bill 164. I hope that submission will not prolong the process, to make it difficult for you to make your ruling prior to the government House leader's ill-advised determination to call Bill 164 even though it is clearly out of order.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON REGULATIONS AND PRIVATE BILLS

Mr Toby Barrett (Norfolk): I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on regulations and private bills and move its adoption.

Clerk at the Table (Mr Todd Decker): Your committee begs to report the following bill without amendment:

Bill Pr91, An Act respecting The London Community Foundation. Your committee further recommends that the fees and the actual costs of printing at all stages be remitted on Bill Pr91, An Act respecting The London Community Foundation.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

MOTIONS

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): I move that, notwithstanding standing order 6(a), the House shall continue to meet commencing Monday, December 15, 1997, until Thursday, December 18, 1997; that pursuant to standing order 9(c), the House shall meet from 6:30 pm to 9:30 pm on December 15 and 16, 1997; and that pursuant to standing order 9(e)(i), the House shall meet from 6:30 pm to 12 midnight on December 17 and 18, 1997, for the purpose of conducting government business, at which time the Speaker shall adjourn the House without motion until the next sessional day.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): Mr Speaker, I rise on a point of order, of which I've provided you with a written submission, regarding the motion on the House calendar that the government House leader has just put. The government House leader has tabled a motion this week that would extend the sitting of the Legislature for one week and sets out times that the Legislature would meet during this additional week. The government House leader is now attempting to argue, by calling the motion during routine motions, that this House calendar motion is a routine motion, not a substantive motion. I think it's clear that this is improper.

You will be aware, Speaker, that standing order 34 says that the routine proceeding entitled "Motions" is for the purpose of "routine motions that are part of the technical procedure of the House" such as "for times of meeting and adjournment of the House" — and I emphasize times of meeting and adjournment of the House — and for changes in membership of committees and similar non-substantive motions. These routine motions do not require notice. The standing order is clear. Routine motions deal only with the times of meeting and adjourn-

ment of this House, not with the dates that this House will meet.

The motion that the government wishes to deal with today sets out four additional calendar days that the House will meet. However, that actually means an additional eight sessional days that the House will meet, thanks to the new rule changes this government imposed on the Legislature. Because of these recent rule changes to the standing orders, afternoon and evening sittings are counted, as you know, as separate sessional days. This motion makes substantive changes to the House calendar, changes that are outside the parameters of the standing orders.

A substantive motion is defined in standing order 48 as, "One that is not incidental to any other business of the House, but is a self-contained proposal capable of expressing a decision of the House." These motions do require notice. If the government House leader believed that the House calendar motion was routine, he would not have announced it for debate in the business of the House statement last Thursday.

At that time the government House leader announced, and I quote from Thursday's Hansard, page 13359, "On Wednesday afternoon, we expect to deal with Bill 161.... In the evening, we will be dealing with a House calendar motion. If that finishes, which I fully expect it will with the cooperation of the other parties, Bill 108, the provincial offences act, will be called in committee of the whole House."

Obviously, on Thursday last week the government House leader believed this was a substantive motion. He was not of the opinion that the House calendar motion was a routine motion or he would not have given notice of debate. I ask you to rule whether this is indeed a substantive motion and requires notice and is subject to debate in the House.

1400

Mr Peter L. Preston (Brant-Haldimand): Your party is not known for long sessions, that's for sure.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Do you want to make a submission, member for Brant-Haldimand?

Member for St Catharines.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I am actually quite surprised that we would see the government House leader rise at this time with what he is trying to pass off obviously as a very routine motion. Even the draconian new rules of the administration of Mike Harris, this present government, surely set out that there shall be time for debate, because we are clearly outside the normal procedures of this House, outside the calendar which has been printed and circulated to members of the House. It may well be that the opposition would be delighted to have the House sit that additional week, but certainly in our view, unless there is an agreement made at a House leaders' meeting which would negate that, it will be necessary to debate it, keeping in mind again that we are talking about a two-for-one situation. Now we have two sessional days in one day; it's almost like Houdini or Mandrake the Magician, in that the government now has two days that it counts for one day.

Interjection.

Mr Bradley: The member for —

The Speaker: The member for Dufferin-Peel.

Mr Bradley: I just wanted to mention that I had the information from him. He remembers Mandrake the Magician.

It isn't routine for the House to sit that additional week if it is to accommodate controversial legislation, because the Speaker will know that the House rules have been changed so that the government in its last two weeks, for instance, may now bring in new legislation despite the argument made by the member for Parry Sound, the former government House leader, so clearly we would be expecting the government would concede that this is a substantive motion and that the House leader would want to discuss this at a House leaders' meeting rather than trying to slip it in this afternoon as a routine motion.

Hon Mr Sterling: Mr Speaker, I did give notice to both of the other House leaders that I would be calling this during routine proceedings, and I believe that's why the House leader for the third party has submitted written reasons.

"Under the proceeding 'Motions,' the government House leader may move routine motions that are part of a technical procedure of the House, including motions under standing order 9 and other motions for times of meeting and adjournment of the House, and motions for changes in membership of committees and similar non-substantive matters. Except as provided by standing order 9, these routine matters do not require notice."

Our motion as tabled provides notice as required under standing order 9(c) for sittings from 6:30 to 9:30 pm, and standing order 9(e) for sittings from 6:30 pm to midnight. Further, our motion fulfils the requirements of standing order 34, as it represents a motion that is part of the technical procedure of the House which establishes the times of meeting and adjournment of the House. Standing order 8(a) defines the meeting time of the House. It reads, "The House shall meet on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Wednesdays at 1:30 pm, and on Thursdays at 10 am, unless otherwise ordered."

I would submit, however, that the wording of standing order 8(a) in its specific references to the days of the week when the House shall meet implicitly defines meeting times as both days of the week and hours of those days. For instance, the standing order does not permit the House to sit on Fridays or during the course of the weekend. To rely on a literal, narrow reading or translation of a standing order would not be appropriate.

I would argue that in spite of the standing orders, we have on many occasions in this House moved during routine proceedings to change the days on which this House sits.

On June 28, 1988, during routine proceedings there was an order that the House meet from 9 am until 12 noon on Wednesday, June 29, 1988, with routine proceedings to take place at 1 pm. There was a division at that time and the majority carried; that was carried.

On December 11, 1990 — sorry, Mr Speaker, that's not one of the examples that I wanted to use.

Mr Wildman: I wonder why.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I'm finding it extremely difficult, and especially back here as well. Folks behind here, you've got to keep it down back here. All about this place there are so many meetings going on it's distracting. I'm going to ask the members —

Interjection.

The Speaker: Member for Nepean, it's not helpful for you to jabber on right now. If the members would please come back to order, I'd appreciate it, so I can hear the submissions. Thank you.

Hon Mr Sterling: During routine proceedings on November 16, 1987, the House decided to consider government business on November 19 and private members' business to be considered on November 26. In other words, we were not only dealing during routine proceedings with times but we were dealing with dates on which the House would sit.

On December 30 we did the same thing. During routine proceedings we decided that the House would sit on December 31 for certain kinds of business. On January 6, 1988, during routine proceedings we decided that on January 7 we would sit to deal with certain kinds of business. On June 16, 1988, during routine proceedings we decided that the House would not meet on June 23.

Therefore, there has been ample evidence of motions during routine proceedings being put forward, notwithstanding that there was not unanimous consent during all of the examples I have given but the motions carried in favour of the government to move those motions.

I guess the other point is, does it really make sense for us in terms of a normal, lengthy debate to deal with matters which are related to the times when this House should meet or should not meet?

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): On the same point, Mr Speaker: I think where you start is with the standing orders and the plain reading of the standing orders that were adopted by this Parliament just two or three months ago.

If you look at the table of contents, section III is called "Meetings of the House." It starts off by setting out the parliamentary calendar and it specifically states in section 6(a), "During a Parliament, the House shall meet (a) from the Monday following the week prescribed by the regulations made under the Education Act..." etc, and then in 6(a)(ii) it states "from the fourth Monday in September to the Thursday preceding the week in which Remembrance Day falls and from the Monday of the week following Remembrance Day to the second Thursday in December," which happens to be December 11. Section 6 deals with the calendar.

In section 7 you get more specific as to when the House can meet, taking into account the calendar that has been set out in section 6. Then it gets more specific as to how the meetings will actually take place and the times of the meetings.

To suggest, as the government House leader is suggesting, that somehow the calendar, on which the meeting times set out in section 8 are based, can be changed unilaterally without changing the calendar at all is simply not correct. You start off at the calendar, then, if you are within the time frame of that calendar as to when the House normally meets, and then as to when it can meet within the calendar outside of those times, up until 9:30 at night or 12 o'clock at night.

It would be our submission that the rule as set in section 9, which is clearly within that section of the rules that talk about the meetings of the House, has to be subject to whatever is set out in the very first section under that particular section dealing with the meetings of the House, has got to be within the House calendar parameters as set out in section 6.

Ms Lankin: Mr Speaker, there are just a couple of points that I want to make with respect to this point of order. First, the government House leader sets out a number of precedents. I think if you reviewed all of the precedents on this issue, the number of times that House calendar motions have been called forward, you would see there are precedents on both sides.

In other words, there have been times when it has been dealt with as a routine motion, most often I would say in times where there have been unanimous consents or, if not unanimous consents, there has been an agreement of the House in proceeding that way in the sense, for example, that the motion is dealing with the House sitting an extra day, being the next day, or something in which there have been time implications that have led to an agreement among House leaders that this item should be dealt with expeditiously, whether or not the content of the motion has been agreed to.

But I think there are precedents on both sides and you will find many, many more occasions in which it has been dealt with as a substantive motion. The point that I want to make is, if you are unable, simply by looking at precedents, to come to a determination with respect to the question that has been put before you, then I would ask you to look at what has happened most recently with respect to the changes of the rules in this Legislative Assembly.

We are referring now, of course, to whether or not this motion that has come forward is a routine motion under section 34. As has been pointed out to you, that refers to technical procedural motions, including motions under standing order 9. Standing order 9 is the section of the rules of order which sets out times for the sitting of the House and the extension till 9:30, for example, or the extension till midnight, and other motions "for times of meeting and adjournment of the House."

That phrase essentially is lifted out of the previous rules of order. The corresponding rule of order in the previous standing rules is number 35, which says, "Under the proceeding 'Motions,' the government House leader may move routine motions that are part of the technical procedure of the House" — those words are identical. The reference in here to section 9 is new because that section 9

is brand-new, but it goes on to say "such as for times of meeting and adjournment of the House...." Essentially, we're dealing with the same words.

I would point out to you, Mr Speaker, that the new section that has been added, section 9, does specify certain new things with respect to motions dealing with the times that this House meets and sits and the times of the day at which it meets and sits. It does, for example, allow for evening sessions which are new sessional days that sit till 9:30. It also sets out a new procedure for a motion which allows the House sittings to be extended at any time past 6 or past 9:30 to midnight. In the past, you know that would have been provided as a motion under routine motions. It would be debated. This sets out rules which say it's not open to amendment, it's not open to debate, the immediate five-minute bell.

The point I am trying to make is that the rules with respect to motions and how they are considered, which are dealing with the times of meetings of the House and adjournment of the House, have been specifically altered and updated by these rules. The government did not put forward any proposals in rule changes with respect to dealing with the House calendar motion.

Had it been the wish of this Legislative Assembly as expressed through its majority and through the government House leader's office, there would have been specific provision put forward for that. In every other instance where the government was attempting to limit the House's ability to debate motions with respect to the times, meetings and adjournments of the House, they specifically made provision for that in the new rules set out under the new section 9.

I believe that, both in the absence of something clearly having been set out and in the preponderance of precedents which say it should be treated as a substantive motion, although I will acknowledge there are precedents on both sides of that question, I believe it is incumbent upon you to rule that this is out of order at this time, as the government House leader, as recently as last week when he gave notice, believed it himself to be.

The Speaker: We will take a 10-minute recess.

The House recessed from 1415 to 1425.

The Speaker: Thank you for the submissions of all the members on all sides of the House. I don't find that this fits in with routine motions and it must be called an order of the day.

Ms Lankin: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would like to ask for unanimous consent to have all-party statements on International Day for Persons With Disabilities.

The Speaker: You're simply asking for unanimous consent. I'll just put it: Unanimous consent for statements from all parties on what was mentioned by the member for Beaches-Woodbine? Agreed? No.

Time for oral questions.

Interjection: Deferred vote.

Mr Bradley: Can we go back?

The Speaker: Yes, you can, because the Speaker is omnipotent on those issues.

DEFERRED VOTES

FAIR MUNICIPAL
FINANCE ACT, 1997 (NO. 2)LOI DE 1997 SUR LE FINANCEMENT
ÉQUITABLE DES MUNICIPALITÉS (N^o 2)

Deferred vote on the motion for third reading of Bill 149, An Act to continue the reforms begun by the Fair Municipal Finance Act, 1997 and to make other amendments respecting the financing of local governments / Projet de loi 149, Loi continuant les réformes amorcées par la Loi de 1997 sur le financement équitable des municipalités et apportant d'autres modifications relativement au financement des administrations locales.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1428 to 1433.

The Speaker: All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Amott, Ted	Guzzo, Gary J.	Parker, John L.
Baird, John R.	Hardeman, Ernie	Pettit, Trevor
Barrett, Toby	Harnick, Charles	Preston, Peter
Bassett, Isabel	Hastings, John	Rollins, E.J. Douglas
Beaubien, Marcel	Hodgson, Chris	Runciman, Robert W.
Boushy, Dave	Hudak, Tim	Sampson, Rob
Brown, Jim	Johns, Helen	Saunderson, William
Carr, Gary	Johnson, Bert	Sheehan, Frank
Carroll, Jack	Johnson, David	Skarica, Toni
Chudleigh, Ted	Jordan, W. Leo	Smith, Bruce
Clement, Tony	Kells, Morley	Spina, Joseph
Cunningham, Dianne	Klees, Frank	Sterling, Norman W.
DeFaria, Carl	Leach, Al	Tilson, David
Doyle, Ed	Leadston, Gary L.	Tumbull, David
Ecker, Janet	Marland, Margaret	Vankoughnet, Bill
Elliott, Brenda	Martiniuk, Gerry	Villeneuve, Noble
Fisher, Barbara	Maves, Bart	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Flaherty, Jim	Munro, Julia	Wilson, Jim
Fox, Gary	Murdoch, Bill	Witmer, Elizabeth
Froese, Tom	Mushinski, Marilyn	Wood, Bob
Galt, Doug	Newman, Dan	Young, Terence H.
Gilchrist, Steve	O'Toole, John	
Grimmett, Bill	Palladini, Al	

The Speaker: All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Bartolucci, Rick	Duncan, Dwight	Martin, Tony
Bisson, Gilles	Gerretsen, John	McGuinty, Dalton
Boyd, Marion	Grandmaitre, Bernard	McLeod, Lyn
Bradley, James J.	Gravelle, Michael	Miclash, Frank
Brown, Michael A.	Hoy, Pat	Morin, Gilles E.
Caplan, David	Kennedy, Gerard	Patten, Richard
Castrilli, Annamaria	Kormos, Peter	Phillips, Gerry
Christopherson, David	Kwinter, Monte	Pouliot, Gilles
Churley, Marilyn	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Pupatello, Sandra
Cleary, John C.	Lankin, Frances	Ramsay, David
Colle, Mike	Laughren, Floyd	Sergio, Mario
Conway, Sean G.	Lessard, Wayne	Silipo, Tony
Crozier, Bruce	Marchese, Rosario	Wildman, Bud
Curling, Alvin	Martel, Shelley	Wood, Len

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 67; the nays are 42.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Be it resolved that this bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): I would like to inform the members of the Legislative Assembly that we have in the Speaker's gallery today Mr Gani Abdurakhmanov and his delegation from the republic of Uzbekistan. Welcome.

ORAL QUESTIONS

DIONNE QUINTUPLETS

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Attorney General. I'm sure, like all of us in this Legislature, you cannot help but feel some shame, some sadness and some embarrassment at what happened to the Dionne quintuplets in Ontario so many years ago.

You will well know that in 1934 they were taken from their parents and made wards of the province. They were placed in a special hospital, and over the next 10 years they were put on display. Over five million visitors came from around the world to visit them. These young girls generated millions and millions of dollars for Ontario. The Ontario government exploited these children.

What I want to ask you to consider right here and now is whether it would not be appropriate in those circumstances to stand up today on behalf of the people of Ontario and to offer the surviving Dionne quintuplets an apology.

Hon Charles Harnick (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): As I have indicated, we have certainly not shut the door on discussions with the Dionnes. We have a great deal of sympathy for the situation they find themselves in. As I've indicated, based on a legal review of the facts, it's very difficult to justify conventional compensation. But I have indicated there is a moral issue here; the government is looking at the moral issue. The fact that we are doing that should satisfy the answer the Leader of the Opposition is looking for. Certainly we are taking steps to resolve these issues.

Mr McGuinty: I'm simply asking for an apology. I think that in all the circumstances, that is the least we can do today on behalf of the people of the province for what happened to the Dionne quintuplets. They were taken from their parents. They were housed in a special hospital. They generated millions and millions of dollars; the estimate is as high as \$500 million. The Ontario government produced tens of thousands of pamphlets that were distributed as part of a tourism effort to lure people here to Ontario, particularly to northern Ontario. This was the middle of the Depression. All kinds of jobs were created. There are some very real questions that remain outstanding. But all I'm asking today is, given that the gov-

ernment was to act as good parents at the time, do we not owe an apology to the Dionne quintuplets?

Hon Mr Harnick: When we talk about these issues, we have to put it in the context of the law of the day. In my understanding of these issues, the public trustee was involved. There was an appointment, through the government of the day, of trustees to manage the affairs. Certainly in the context of the laws of the day, the interests of the Dionnes were looked after.

By today's standards, I don't think the laws that existed to protect children in that particular time are comparable, but certainly we are taking a look at the moral issues. We want to take the necessary steps to resolve these issues, and I hope we will.

1440

Mr McGuinty: Minister, on behalf of the Dionne quintuplets and I think on behalf of most Ontarians who developed some understanding of what happened, I'm looking for two simple words from you, on behalf of all of us. I can't give those words. I'm not the government and you are. All I'm asking you to do is to say on behalf of the people of the province to the Dionne quintuplets: "I'm sorry for what happened. I apologize." Nothing more and nothing less.

Surely, if we are to govern our relations here purely according to the system of law, we are in a sorry, sorry state. I believe you're not saying that. You understand there's some kind of moral obligation here. I think recognizing that moral obligation begins with two very simple words, and I'm going to ask you once again to say them. I want you to stand up and say on behalf of the people of the province of Ontario to the quintuplets, "I'm sorry for what happened."

Hon Mr Harnick: Without question, I have the greatest sympathy and I am sorry for the plight the Dionnes find themselves in. I am sorry that the laws of that time were not adequate to protect children. I am sorry that we have had this situation develop and that the Dionnes are in the situation they're in.

That is precisely why we are taking a look at this issue. We want to try and ensure that the Dionnes will be properly looked after. Certainly, on behalf of the government of Ontario, I am sorry that this happened, going back to the way the laws were written and the way children were protected by the laws, going back to the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s. I say to the leader of the official opposition, yes, I am sorry about that, on behalf of all the people of Ontario.

HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Minister of Health. Just to recap what has happened on the hospital closure front in Ontario, first of all, Mike Harris, before he became Premier, promised he wouldn't close any hospitals. Then your government set up a hospital closing commission and now 30 hospitals have been closed. You became the Minister of Health. You immediately concluded that there

was no vision for health care in Ontario, that there was no plan in place, and you quite rightly became alarmed. Then you said that it was important to slow things down, and I agree entirely with that.

What I want to know now is, how is it that ordering the closure of five more hospitals is slowing down? Doesn't slowing down mean that you take your foot off the gas and put it on the brake pedal? That's not what has happened here. The hospital closing commission has proceeded to order the closure of five more hospitals. How does that constitute slowing down?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health): Yes, we have the Health Services Restructuring Commission and it has now made some decisions that affect about 75% of the hospitals that are going to be reviewed. I think it's very important to understand that they are coming to the end of that particular role and at that point in time they will be assuming an advisory role.

In the interim, I have indicated that when the final recommendations are issued, we will make sure we have the appropriate community supports and long-term-care facilities in place to ensure that, as we take a look at the changing and the aging population, we will have the spaces, we will have the care that is necessary to deal with the population in the province of Ontario.

Mr McGuinty: You said it was time to slow down. They're still out there travelling the province, some renegade operation, closing hospitals. Don't you really think it's time to reel them in and tell them to stop? You said it was time to slow down. You have effectively recognized that what they're doing is dangerous to our health care. They're ordering the closure of hospitals and we're not taking the time to get it right. We're not taking the time to ensure that the community-based care that's necessary when you shut down a hospital is first in place.

Don't you think that in all the circumstances the right thing to do if you really want to slow down is to order the restructuring commission, your closing commission, to stop its work? Isn't it time to disband it and for you to assume your rightful responsibility as the person responsible for hospitals in Ontario?

Hon Mrs Witmer: It's very important to remember that this province is the last province in Canada to embark on this review and this restructuring of health care. It's also important to remember that during the 10 years when the other governments were in office, there was the removal of 10,000 beds. However, we did not have one single facility closed.

What we are attempting to do is ensure that patient care will be provided first and foremost. What that is going to mean is that we need to take a look at what is required for patients in this province at this time, and it's not unused hospital spaces. It means we're going to have to reinvest our money into the community supports and into long-term-care facilities. It means we're going to have to make some changes, changes that have been made everywhere else in Canada already.

Mr McGuinty: I think I've heard this tune before from the previous minister. This minister was going to slow

things down. She was going to get a handle on what was happening over at the ministry. Your platitude that you just uttered will do nothing for the people of Ontario. Go out there and knock on a few doors. What you're doing to health care in Ontario is scaring the heck out of Ontarians. Just go out there and knock on a few doors and you'll quickly discover that.

Let me tell you why I'm really concerned. In your instructions to the hospital closing commission — I've got a copy of them here — it says, "The following are the duties of the commission." Duty 3 says it's up to the commission to determine the timing of the implementation of local hospital restructuring plans. How can you tell us, on the one hand, that you're going to slow things down; on the other hand, clearly your instructions to the commission, irrevocable apparently, are for it to make its own decisions about hospital closures in Ontario.

If you're really going to slow things down, you have to disband the commission. There's no other option. Why don't you just stand up and say that right now? "It's gone. We don't have to worry about it any more."

Hon Mrs Witmer: As I indicated to you, it is time to embark on reform in the field of health care in this province. The reform is long overdue. What we are simply doing is taking a look at the aging population, we are taking a look at the growing population, we are taking a look at the needs of the population in this province and we are now convinced that it makes absolutely no sense to have 10,000 beds being closed under your government and the previous government. So we are going to invest those dollars that were previously used on administration and unused buildings in patient care.

In fact, I will just read from a quote that was made by the Leader of the Opposition when it comes to the closure of hospitals, when you said: "I would have as an overriding objective improvement of our health care system. A component of that might be the closure of a hospital." So even you recognized that it is necessary to take a look at where —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): New question, third party, member for Fort York. Come to order, please, Minister of Health.

1450

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): I have a question to mon ami the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Yesterday we saw an unprecedented event: Conservative members voting against the government's download bill. On the radio this morning the member for Oakville South said that the government had botched the issue on downloading. I go further and say that they have botched the issue by downloading \$1.4 billion to local taxpayers. I go further by saying they've botched the issue by dumping a ticking time bomb of \$200 million in housing repair costs on the new megacity. I go further and say you botched the issue by refusing to reveal the criteria

for your transition funds, less than a month before municipalities start paying the bills.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Question, please.

Mr Marchese: To quote the member for Wentworth North, "We said we were going to run the government like a business, and here we are, less than a month to go, we still don't have the figures," says the member.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I thank my good friend for the question. The members of this party are more than free to express their opinions on any issue. In all parties, some members vote —

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order.

Hon Mr Leach: I know my good friend knows that members of his own party often voted against their government. Bill 167 I think rings a bell.

With respect to what we're doing with Bill 152 and the Who Does What trades, I will repeat once again that the effect of the Who Does What trades on municipalities is revenue-neutral. We have committed that it will be revenue-neutral, both myself and the Premier; 79 members of our caucus accept that. There are several who have doubts; that's their prerogative. However, Mr Speaker, I can assure you and the members that the exercise of the trades will be revenue-neutral for every municipality.

The Speaker: Supplementary; member for London Centre.

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): Minister, not only are you not telling the municipalities what the tax burden is going to be, but you're not even acceding, and you haven't today, that they're in danger of losing a lot of services.

The services we're most worried about are public health services, which your Who Does What panel clearly told you not to download on to municipalities. The protection of public health is a protection for all the citizens of Ontario. There are many programs that are likely not to have the same level of funding as they had when they were 100% funded by the province because you've downloaded that \$1.2 billion more in costs to municipalities, and yet you're trying to suggest that they're going to be able to provide the same level of services.

Minister, we're very worried about what Bill 152 has done in terms of the guarantee of public health services, the protection of the health of the province. You botched the entire program. Are you insisting on botching the health of the population of Ontario too?

Hon Mr Leach: I'll try and make this as simple as I can for the members opposite. We're taking \$2.5 billion off the property taxes by assuming 50% of the cost of education. We're also providing, on an ongoing annual basis, roughly \$600 million in support to the municipalities. In exchange, the municipalities will accept about \$1.3 billion in hard services on roads and transit and about \$1.7 billion in social services. We're asking the municipalities to assume 20% of social services. So 1.7 and 1.3,

and 2.5 and 0.6; in simple mathematics, that works out to be a wash. Even the members opposite might be able to understand that if they worked on it a little bit.

Mrs Boyd: No one believes you. You've heard from all the municipalities that they don't believe you. This is in no way a neutral wash. You put in a bill like Bill 152, which is going to make the choices of municipalities very clear. They will have to look at downloading services, or destroying services, because they will not have the dollars. What's more, you've taken away the authority of the medical officer of health and the provincial medical officer of health to override the decisions of individual municipalities.

Let's look at programs where municipalities have already cut: dental care in the city of Metropolitan Toronto, for example. They've cut it by 50% already and they're still meeting provincial standards.

The Speaker: Question, please.

Mrs Boyd: The AIDS committee had a conference today and they're talking about the issue of anonymous testing for AIDS and HIV; they're talking about condom distribution; they're talking about needle distribution. These will now be up to municipalities to decide and the province will no longer be funding them. This is an erosion of public health —

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon Mr Leach: I don't know how much simpler I can make this. When you take \$2.5 billion off the education property tax, add another \$600 million of funding to municipalities, ask the municipalities to accept \$2.5 billion of other responsibilities — 2.5 minus 2.5 equals zero. When they were in power, it was the member just speaking who said, "The result of disentanglement will increase accountability, which is more important than ever in today's economic climate." Absolutely. We're asking the municipalities to take control of programs that they're best able to deliver. That includes the health programs and everything else.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Members for Beaches-Woodbine, Riverdale and London Centre, come to order.

Hon Mr Leach: I heard the member opposite say "completely lost." I once was lost, but now I'm found.

To the member opposite, this is a trade. It's a trade in the delivery of services. It's a trade that's even and revenue-neutral. We've committed to do that. The municipalities understand that; most of the members understand that. Obviously, these people over here are too simple to understand it.

The Speaker: New question; the member for Algoma.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I didn't know the hymn Amazing Grace was written about Al Leach.

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I have a question to the Minister of Education and Training. The uproar over Bill 160 hasn't gone away. Let's look at your new property taxing powers. The provincial government will now be

setting residential and business property taxes in secret. The government has given a few hints about how they're going to do it. The Ontario Alternative Budget Working Group has a report today that projects the impact based on the little information that the government has made public.

It shows that business property taxes in greater Toronto will increase by \$139 million. Business taxpayers will be hit hard in Burlington and Oakville. They'll be going up 16%. In Mississauga, the education property tax on business will increase by 18.4%. What do you think Hazel McCallion is going to think about that?

1500

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Question.

Mr Wildman: Don't you understand that people are upset about what you're doing in Bill 160 and they want you to rethink the whole process? Will you allow people to have a say —

The Speaker: Minister of Education.

Hon David Johnson (Minister of Education and Training): In general, I think the people of Ontario are very much in favour of reform in the education system.

I would say in particular with regard to those clauses that pertain to taxation, I think the member opposite will know that there is every indication as of this morning that this is a matter that will be, or indeed is, before the courts of the province of Ontario, so I'm somewhat restricted in terms of what I can say. But I will say, in terms of choosing the mechanism that we did, that the objectives were to halt the skyrocketing of education taxes which had taken place and to ensure that the tax system was fair and equitable across Ontario.

Mr Wildman: I suppose the government is now going to use this as an excuse for not giving us the funding formula: "The matter's before the courts."

The minister didn't agree with or deny the figures that are put out in the Ontario Alternative Budget Working Group document. These are projections of the impact. Why won't you release the impact studies that surely your government has done with regard to this? There are going to be winners and losers, and the power in determining who wins and who loses is all in your hands.

As the alternative budget says: "How much will be the change? Only Mike Harris knows, and he's not saying." How you decide, we'll never know.

Why won't you let us know how you decided this, what the impacts will be, so that business property taxpayers in the province will have some idea and the municipalities will have some idea of the impact of Bill 160 and your changes when you set property taxes for education?

Hon David Johnson: This is a matter that comes within the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Finance. The Minister of Finance has stood in this House and indicated that there will be a freeze provision which will apply to property taxes in the future — that residential property taxes would be frozen, business taxes, in total — while there's a new assessment that's coming in. I think the members of this House have to bear in mind that there's a new property assessment system which will be introduced next year within the province of Ontario which will be a

fairer system right across the province. That will obviously play into the equation as well.

Nevertheless, in terms of the businesses here today, in total they will not pay more in property taxes for education purposes than they're paying today. That is something that the business community has been asking for for years and years, and finally a government has come along and made that commitment.

Mr Wildman: The minister knows full well that his colleague the Minister of Finance said he was committed to a freeze in total revenue, not in individual property tax bills for education. He himself admitted there would be some going up and some going down, and not just because of reassessment. The fact is, there will be winners and losers, and it's this government that will determine which business property taxpayers are winners and which ones are big losers.

Do you agree that it is unacceptable for business property taxpayers in Mississauga to see over an 18% increase, or those in Burlington and Oakville to see over a 16% increase? Can you confirm those impacts, and if not, what are the projections that you've got in your government?

Hon David Johnson: Any numbers of that nature are pure speculation at this point in time. Again, the Minister of Finance has been here in this House and explained the situation, that the assessment numbers are being generated across the province. The vast majority of the assessment numbers are in, but there are some final numbers to come in to ensure that the Ministry of Finance has the total picture.

The Minister of Finance has indicated for the business community that the total taxes raised from the businesses which are here today will not exceed next year the revenues from this year. From business to business, depending on the assessment situation, the new assessment going in, some assessments may be up a little bit, some assessments may be down a little bit, and to that degree, yes, the Minister of Finance has indicated that the taxes paid by some businesses may be up, to be balanced by those which go down. That's the nature of a fair system.

EDUCATION FINANCING

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William): My question is also for the Minister of Education. You and Mike Harris have tried to justify your cuts to educational spending by claiming that your changes to the educational system are going to bring about significant savings. You have refused to make a commitment to reinvest any of those savings, but that's not my question today.

My concern today is that your so-called savings are not going to be there at all and that some of your changes may actually lead to increased costs. You will know that your studies have shown that at best your amalgamation of school boards would lead to savings of \$150 million. You also know that public school boards have said that in fact those amalgamations will lead to increased costs of \$300 million to \$500 million a year.

If the boards are right and you are wrong, will you cover these millions of dollars of increased costs or will school boards have to just eat those costs along with your cuts?

Hon David Johnson (Minister of Education and Training): If you have well over 100 school boards today and you have about 70 school boards in the future and you have that much less administration and that much less overhead, I think the people of Ontario would have every right to expect that indeed there will be savings through those amalgamations in the province. The kind of information we have had, including some assistance within the private sector, has indicated that \$150 million is indeed a valid number.

In terms of the moneys the school boards will get, I'm sure the member opposite is aware through the booklet we put out, Excellence in Education: Student-focused Funding for Ontario, that there are moneys contained within the proposed formula for students through a foundation grant, through special purpose grants and through accommodation grants. These formulae are being revised at this time, going through their final stages. The boards will be totally aware of the exact amount of money in the very near future, and it will support their needs for their students.

Mrs McLeod: You really can't continue to play word games and express your vague sense of hope and expectation about educational financing much longer. You are now totally responsible for educational funding, and at some point you are going to have to accept that responsibility and tell us exactly what you are going to pay for and what you are not going to pay for.

Let me ask you a simpler funding question very relevant for today. Today you will force through another bill, Bill 161, and we still don't know what the costs of that particular bill are going to be. Nobody has said how much boards will have to pay to keep your commitment to pay the \$40 per day per family. There are boards that are worried that the costs of meeting your commitment will be greater than any savings they had during the two-week protest, and all boards are concerned that they are going to be expected to simply eat the administrative costs, which could mean thousands of dollars that should be spent on things like school supplies or school maintenance. Will you guarantee today that you will cover any additional costs of your commitment over and above any savings?

Hon David Johnson: It's expected that the vast majority of the boards will have revenues that were not expended because of the two weeks of the illegal strike and that those expenditures will indeed cover the costs of the \$40 which will be paid to parents who have been inconvenienced and incurred extra costs up to \$40 where they are eligible. In those cases, and there may be some small boards, particularly boards that focus more on the elementary than on elementary and secondary, and if indeed those boards have incurred additional costs through the payment to parents who have had to incur expenditures beyond what the revenues have diminished as a result of the two weeks of the illegal strike, then yes indeed, the

province of Ontario will ensure that those boards are not out money.

1510

ALGOMA STEEL CORP

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I have a question for the Minister of Northern Development and Mines, which I know will be of particular interest to page Sandra Lamon from Wawa. It's in regard to the very grave situation facing the community of Wawa as a result of the announcement last night by the Algoma Steel board of directors that there would be a complete cessation of the Algoma Ore division, mining operation and sintering operation in June 1998, affecting 220 employees and the whole economy of Wawa.

Algoma Steel stated that it is "committed to working with the community of Wawa and the provincial and federal governments in determining ways in which the community can be assisted in dealing with the impact of the closure."

I know the assistant deputy minister of northern development and mines is going to Wawa on Wednesday. Will he be there to announce that this government is prepared to participate in providing financial assistance for community adjustment for the people of Wawa and the community of Wawa?

Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Northern Development and Mines): I want to thank the member of the third party for the question. He and I have talked about this before, and he knows that we on the government side share his concern and heartfelt empathy with the community of Wawa. These situations are never easy. It's regrettable. This announcement, as he knows, was not unexpected; nevertheless, that doesn't make it any less painful for the people of Wawa.

As he mentioned, our assistant deputy minister will be there on Wednesday. I will be speaking with the president of Algoma Steel after question period today. We will be working with the community to see what can be done in the future.

Mr Wildman: I appreciate the minister's response and the fact that the assistant deputy will be Wawa. I would hope that the minister will join with the company and the community in providing financial assistance for dealing with the impact and in persuading the federal government to participate financially as well.

I appreciate the minister's response and anticipate that he's rejecting the position taken by Tom Long in June 1993, when he was quoted as saying, "The fates of struggling companies, each of which employ thousands of people, should be determined by market forces." Are we going to assist the community to respond to the market forces and to provide impact adjustment for the whole community, the business community and all the residents of Wawa?

Hon Mr Hodgson: As I mentioned to the member for the third party, I share his concern for the community of

Wawa and the members of his riding. We've talked about this in the past. We will work with the community and with Algoma Steel. I'm not about to commit to some announcement right here. I think it's best that we work with the community involved and see what's appropriate. I appreciate the question.

GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS

Mr William Saunderson (Eglinton): My question is for the Minister of the Environment. Mr Speaker, as you and the members opposite are well aware, the phrase "Think globally, act locally" is now more important than ever in the environment.

For the next two weeks, politicians from all over the world will be gathered in Kyoto, Japan, to discuss climate change. Minister, I understand that you will be attending this conference. My Eglinton constituents are very interested in the environment and Ontario's thoughts concerning climate change. Therefore, would you tell us about Ontario's position that you will be bringing to Kyoto in order to cut greenhouse gas emissions?

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): This is an extremely important subject and it has a very important environmental and economic effect on the province of Ontario. Last month, when I was in Regina, I met with other provincial environment ministers from across Canada. At that meeting there was agreement that we would stabilize our 1990 emissions by the year 2010, and there was a recognition as well by those provincial ministers that more had to be done than just stabilizing.

Presently the federal government has put forward a position that calls for a 3% reduction of 1990 emissions by 2010 and an additional 5% reduction by 2015.

When one relates these to economics, each per cent refers to about 75,000 jobs lost in your economy. Therefore, it is a difficult balance between our economic interests and our environmental interests when we are dealing in —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr Saunderson: Minister, just what has the United States proposed in terms of stabilizing greenhouse gas emissions? Can you please state Ontario's position with regard to our largest trading partner to the south?

Hon Mr Sterling: The goals and the agreement of the United States are very important because our economies are so closely linked with each other. The United States has proposed stabilizing greenhouse gas emissions at 1990 levels during the period 2008-12. I believe that Ontario and Canada must be very much in sync with where the United States will go in this particular conference.

I do not believe we can afford to lose a huge number of jobs when our overall effect on global emissions is somewhat small. We are willing, however, to step out and take our fair share of the pain that would be required with regard to reducing these emissions.

I will be working with the Canadian delegation to put forward their position in the strongest possible way. We understand that this is a serious problem and Ontario is willing to step up to the plate to make its contribution.

TVONTARIO

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur): My question is to the Minister of Culture. The people of Ontario are very concerned about your government's threat to privatize TVOntario, our province's enormously successful, commercial-free, educational television network.

At public hearings that have just wound up across the province — far too few hearings, I might add — the support for TVO to remain publicly owned and operated has been overwhelming: almost 100% support for maintaining the network as it is. Many other people, prominent and otherwise, who believe that TVOntario is a cultural and educational institution that must be protected have spoken out in support of TVOntario, with one conspicuous exception, Minister, and that is you.

The people need to know if you, as the minister responsible for TVO and as the hoped-for advocate for culture in this province, will fight for TVO at the cabinet table. My question is this: Minister, do you support the privatization of TVOntario?

Applause.

Hon Isabel Bassett (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation): This is a question, as you know, for the minister responsible for privatization.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order. I can't hear you.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): Mr Speaker, on a point of order: Had we known that the minister was going to refer the question — we withdraw our applause.

The Speaker: I didn't even hear the minister, to be quite honest. Minister of Culture.

Hon Ms Bassett: Mr Speaker, I referred the question to the minister for privatization, whose area it belongs in now.

Interjections.

1520

The Speaker: Minister responsible for privatization.

Applause.

The Speaker: It's coming off your time.

Hon Rob Sampson (Minister without Portfolio [Privatization]): Thank you very much, Speaker. Thank you to the minister as well. I'm sure the House will accord her a full round of applause next time she takes a full question.

To the member opposite, he is well aware of the fact that we are reviewing a number of government businesses through the privatization secretariat. One of them is indeed TVO. As part of the consultation process that we have implemented, we have elected to engage a group of experts to go around the province and to get some opinions from Ontarians, because we believe Ontarians have a role to play in the assessment of the government businesses

we're looking at. That's what we've put in place for the consultation round that was referred to by the member across the floor, and I'm quite pleased in fact that Ontarians were able to attend there and express their opinions on what they saw was important for TVO.

Mr Gravelle: I think it's shameful that the Minister of Culture will not speak on behalf of TVOntario — she is the minister responsible — and simply answer the question directly. It's quite shameful, it really is. I'm very disappointed.

May I direct my supplementary back to the minister, Speaker. Minister, if I may direct it back to you, I've had the benefit of attending most of the public hearings held across the province, including one in my home town of Thunder Bay, and people at the hearings have expressed grave concern that this public hearing process would not be listened to by you or your colleague, the minister of privatization. In effect, the integrity of this consultation process is very much in question unless you can guarantee that this consultation, short, hurried and underpublicized as it was, is taken seriously.

Minister, the people of Ontario who attended these hearings and the millions of TVOntario weekly viewers demand your support in at least two areas: First, will you guarantee that the community forum panel's report is made public by Minister Sampson immediately upon receipt, and will you fight to ensure that the people's voice, as expressed in that report, is the voice that counts?

Hon Mr Sampson: Again, Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to answer the question of the member across the floor. The consultation process that he was referring to is just part of the consultation process that we initiated for TVO. The member of course may not be aware of this, but if he would research the issue a little further he would find out that members of the secretariat have spoken to the regional councils that represent TVO viewers and members regionally as well. They spoke extensively with those groups.

As it relates to the community meetings that were had, I'm quite pleased that they were well attended and we had an opportunity to hear from Ontarians in select groups what they thought was important in TVO and what they would like to see the future of TVO look like. We definitely intend to listen to that because, as I said to the member across the floor, we think Ontarians have a role to play and we are going to listen to what they have to say.

ACADEMIC TESTING

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I have a question to the Minister of Education and Training. As the minister knows, student assessment and testing has value; it has value to parents, who, along with report cards, will be able to understand the progress of their students, their children in school. It's of value to teachers to help them to evaluate those students. But when it comes to the school-by-school reporting, the Education Quality and Accountability Office has done a great disservice to Ontario's students, teachers and parents by including students who

were exempt from or absent from the exam in the calculation of the results.

Take, for example, Bowmore Road public school in east-end Toronto: 21% of the grade 3 students in that school were exempted from the test, and for 2% there were no data.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Question, please.

Mr Wildman: Here is how the test results were affected: Of the students at this school who wrote the grade 3 test, 92% achieved level 2, 3 or 4, but when you measure the outcome in relation to all grade 3 students at the school, including those who did not take the test, the result is only 71%. That's a 21-point spread.

How can you assure the accountability of this school system when you use these kinds of reporting methods —

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon David Johnson (Minister of Education and Training): My friend the House leader for the third party and I may agree on this one. I think the Education Quality and Accountability Office has done a great service in general through this testing. I hope and I believe and I think I've heard the members opposite say that, yes, they support the testing as well.

Interjection.

Hon David Johnson: I am seeing that confirmed here at this point in time. In general, I think the testing for the grade 3s and the grade 6s has been of service.

I must say that it is coming to my attention that various students who were exempted, somehow in a calculation of some average numbers, were included as if their score were zero, in a sense. That's not anything, obviously, that the government has done, but the EQAO apparently may have made this kind of calculation.

The Speaker: Answer, please.

Hon David Johnson: I can assure you that I fully intend to talk to the EQAO about this, because I would have a hard time saying it may not be a little misleading in that regard.

I assure the member that I will bring this to the attention at the earliest opportunity —

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr Wildman: This was raised last week, as the minister knows, so I would have hoped he had acted quickly on this. He surely can't use these figures, as the government has done — he certainly can't use them as a benchmark.

Considering the fact that the Toronto Board of Education overall showed 74% of the grade 3 students achieving level 2 or higher in reading, 73% in writing and 77% in mathematics, but that when the exempted or absent students are taken out of the average, 88% of the grade 3 students achieved level 2 or higher in these three tests, will the minister request the EQAO to issue new results, taking those students who were given a zero out of the results so that we actually have an accurate benchmark and so parents will really know how their students are doing?

Hon David Johnson: Be assured that I will bring this matter at the earliest opportunity to the attention of the EQAO and ask that they reconsider how they may publish this sort of information in the future.

The information does cast some interpretation, let's say, on the results school by school, but not student by student. The actual fact is that a level 3 is what is being expected of our students. A level 3 would correspond roughly, in general terms, to about 70%, I guess is how we would have thought about it in former terms, 70% or higher.

The reality, any way you spin it, is that our students are not being given the opportunity to achieve the results, a level 3 or higher, in mathematics, in science and in the other courses. This is of grave concern to the government. I think that's the major note in this, that our students should be given the opportunity to achieve.

1530

RURAL JOBS STRATEGY

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth): My question is for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. In 1995 the people of Perth county put their faith in me to deliver on a promise that the Conservative Party would restore jobs, hope, growth and opportunity. They have watched anxiously over the last two years as we have followed through on this promise and they have looked optimistically towards the future.

Each day we are seeing more jobs being created, yet there is still a sense of apprehension. The latest figures from Statistics Canada would seem to indicate that youth unemployment remains high. In total, nearly 17% of Ontario's youth are unemployed and actively seeking employment. This is not acceptable.

With the launch of our government's new \$30-million rural jobs strategy fund, we have a tremendous opportunity to develop local initiatives that will create employment opportunities for our for our youth.

What strategy has the minister developed to address the problem of high unemployment among the youth in rural Ontario?

Hon Noble Villeneuve (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, minister responsible for francophone affairs): I want to thank my colleague from Perth for that question, because this government and this ministry have been very active. The rural job strategy fund —

Interjections.

Hon Mr Villeneuve: — and I'm pleased to hear from my colleagues across the way — is a \$30-million fund. We were out and consulting. We consulted with the rural —

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order. Minister.

Hon Mr Villeneuve: Isn't it amazing how the opposition has trouble accepting good news? It's absolutely terrible.

We are consulting with the rural community, the young people in the rural community. I want to commend my parliamentary assistant, the honourable member for Bruce, Barb Fisher, who is here today, who listened very closely to the rural community as they suggested what would be best for them. We are now putting into place, based on those consultations, oriented towards keeping our young people where they were born, raised and educated —

The Speaker: Supplementary.

Mr Bert Johnson: Previous governments have told the people of Ontario what they needed. This government is asking the people first, and we are seeing the results.

In an effort to increase the opportunities for youth, I understand that \$3 million of the rural job strategy fund has already been invested through the summer jobs program for rural youth. I'd like to know if this program was a success and what its implementation will mean for youth in rural Ontario.

Hon Mr Villeneuve: We were quite successful. Actually, we targeted some 3,000 students for summer employment. The good news is that 4,300 young people found employment, partially through the support that was provided through the summer jobs creation project.

Rural Ontario has a great deal to offer through the upcoming consultations on young people. I want to commend Laura Perrin from Oxford county, who won our poster contest and indeed illustrated the importance of the agrifood sector and the rural community.

This \$30 million — and somehow or other the opposition seems to think it's not very much money.

Mr Gilles Pouliot (Lake Nipigon): It's not.

Hon Mr Villeneuve: Well, it's \$30 million more than they had, and we've put it into rural jobs.

By cutting red tape and creating an atmosphere that is conducive for business, this government will create jobs in rural Ontario.

Mr Pouliot: Lies. You cut 30 million bucks.

The Speaker: You must withdraw that comment.

Mr Pouliot: I will withdraw it, Mr Speaker.

PROPERTY ASSESSMENT

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. You had a chance to be fair with your Fair Municipal Finance Act, but apparently you decided not to be fair, because as a result of the passage today of Bill 149, there are 10 vulnerable women who are condemned to be removed from their home. Daybreak, which is a charitable organization leasing property from a church, another charitable organization, in spite of its charitable status has been assessed property taxes because it's leasing from a church. The shelter is faced with a \$36,000 tax bill. It will have to close its doors if it's forced to pay. It would then fall to the government to pay for taking care of these women. I'll ask you, are you still in favour of taxing charities, and are you prepared to see these 10 women put out on the street?

Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I thank the member opposite for the question. I

obviously am not aware of the specifics of this particular situation he has brought up. If he would like to send it over, I'd be more than glad to look at it and get back to him.

However, I would like to say that the taxation changes we're bringing in, the assessment changes, are going to bring fairness and equity right across this province. I think everybody recognizes that the assessment and tax system in this province has been fractured and broken for many, many years. It's about time that some government stepped in and brought back the fairness and equity aspects to it. Obviously, there are going to be situations that arise that will have to be addressed. This may be one of them, and we would be very glad to look at that if he wants to send it across. But again I have to say that the assessment changes in this province will bring fairness to a system that hasn't been there for many years.

Mr Patten: I would like to point out that you have in this case your ministry and finance undercutting an organization that is being supported for vulnerable women by community and social services. This particular organization was created by seven Centretown churches. They are a charitable organization. All the staff is underpaid — very dedicated, highly gifted, caring people working with vulnerable women who need support. You know what the waiting lists are like.

There's nowhere else for these women to go. If this goes through, they will be forced to close their doors at the end of the year. Will you please do something to ensure that they have a home come New Year's Day?

Hon Mr Leach: As I said, I'm not aware of the details of this situation. I will look into it and get back to him. I know there are many dedicated organizations that provide excellent service to people in need and this sounds as if it's one of them. But again I want to assure the House and assure the members and the people of this province that this government is addressing a very unfair assessment system that should have been addressed and fixed many years ago. This is going to bring fairness and equity to hundreds of thousands of people who are presently being unfairly taxed. We are going to correct that.

PETITIONS

RÉFORME DU SYSTÈME D'ÉDUCATION

M. Richard Patten (Ottawa-Centre) : J'ai une pétition pour l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario :

«Attendu que nous, les signataires de cette pétition, voulons signifier au gouvernement notre opposition au projet de loi 160 ;

«Attendu que le projet de loi 160 exclut les parents et les enseignants du processus de décision —

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Order. Just a minute. We'll just wait until the House is cleared.

M. Patten : «Attendu que le projet de loi 160 exclut les parents et les enseignants du processus de décision dans le secteur de l'éducation en Ontario ;

«Attendu que le projet de loi 160 centralise tous les pouvoirs entre les mains du gouvernement ;

«Attendu que le projet de loi 160 accorde au gouvernement Harris le pouvoir de retrancher 660 \$ millions de plus du secteur de l'éducation ;

«Nous, les soussignataires, demandons que l'adoption du projet de loi 160 soit remise et que le gouvernement entreprenne des consultations véritables et franches avec tous les groupes concernés.»

J'appuie cette pétition.

1540

ARREST OF PROTESTORS

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): I have a petition signed by about 250 people. It reads:

"We, the undersigned, wish to protest against the treatment of the seven women who were arrested about 5:30 during the peaceful protest against Bill 160 outside the Holiday Inn in Guelph on Tuesday, November 18.

"The seven women were strip-searched and held in a maximum security detention centre until 12:30 am without being charged. This kind of treatment betrays the negotiations between the teachers and the Guelph Police Department prior to the peaceful demonstration.

"Besides being personally humiliated and sexually intimidated by being strip-searched, the women were put in a place that even one of the police officers recognized was dangerous. This became obvious when he warned the women that they must be silent because they were in a maximum security facility where there were men who were murderers and rapists.

"We protest against these fear-arousing tactics, which appear to be designed to deprive people of their civil rights and deny the democratic rights of people to hold a peaceful protest. We respectfully demand a public apology from the police department, where the decision was made to place the women in maximum security. We certainly expect an assurance that such treatment will not happen again.

"Since this happened at a political rally, it would also be appropriate for the Legislature to also offer an apology and an assurance that such treatment will not be tolerated."

I will affix my signature to this petition.

ABORTION

Mr Bob Wood (London South): I have a petition signed by 118 people:

"Whereas the Ontario health system is overburdened and unnecessary spending must be cut; and

"Whereas pregnancy is not a disease, injury or illness and abortions are not therapeutic procedures; and

"Whereas the vast majority of abortions are done for reasons of convenience or finance; and

"Whereas the province has exclusive authority to determine what services will be insured; and

"Whereas the Canada Health Act does not require funding for elective procedures; and

"Whereas there is mounting evidence that abortion is in fact hazardous to women's health; and

"Whereas Ontario taxpayers funded over 45,000 abortions in 1993 at an estimated cost of \$25 million;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario to cease from providing any taxpayers' dollars for the performance of abortions."

EDUCATION FINANCING

Mr John C. Cleary (Cornwall): "Whereas the government of Ontario has not listened to the public with respect to Bill 160; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario has chosen to overtly deceive the people of Ontario as to the true objectives of Bill 160; and

"Whereas we, the people, believe that no government has a mandate to act in isolation of the wishes of the electorate of this province and we have lost confidence in this government,

"We, the undersigned electors of Ontario, petition the Lieutenant Governor to dissolve the Legislature and call a general election forthwith."

CHARITY CASINOS

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): I have a petition to Premier Mike Harris, Minister William Saunderson and members of the Ontario Legislature:

"Whereas Mike Harris during the 1995 election promised voters he would not allow any more casinos without holding a community referendum;

"Whereas Mike Harris's Conservative government of Ontario has designated the Beaches community as one of 36 new permanent charity casino sites without holding a referendum;

"Whereas Mike Harris says these permanent casinos are simply replacing roving charity casinos;

"Whereas roving charity casinos can only be set up for a maximum of three days, can't stay open all night, have no more than 30 tables and take a maximum bet of \$10. On the other hand, the new casinos are permanent, operate 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year, with 40 tables, 150 video slot machines, and maximum bets of \$100;

"Whereas Mike Harris dismisses concerns, saying the total number of gaming days in Toronto won't change;

"Whereas the nature of gambling will change dramatically with the introduction of the highly addictive video slot machines and much higher dollar volume operations, it being evident by the government's estimate that the new permanent casinos will see about \$1 billion a year wagered;

"Whereas Mike Harris says the new permanent casinos will be safer and more accountable;

"Whereas at the Windsor casino extra law enforcement resources were provided by the province and the Harris government has made no such commitment for the new casino in the Beaches;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to cease any bids for the Beaches casino site, to fully consult with the community and not to force a casino site on the community against its wishes."

I have proudly affixed my signature.

YOUNG OFFENDERS

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke-Rexdale): To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the undersigned believes the current Young Offenders Act should be amended;

"The amendment should include a provision for stronger sentencing for offences like murder, robbery, rape and assault; and

"Whereas a clause should also be included to provide police with the necessary manpower to arrest anyone under the age of 18 years for violating current municipal curfew bylaws after 11 pm;

"The community of Etobicoke strongly believe that such a revision in the Young Offenders Act will keep minors from ever being involved in such serious criminal activity;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to urge the federal government to amend the Young Offenders Act so as to toughen sentencing for the most serious offences and to provide the police with the necessary manpower to arrest anyone under the age of 18 years for violating current municipal curfew bylaws after 11 pm;

"We also believe parents should be fined \$100 for repeat offences of the curfew bylaws."

I affix my signature to this petition.

EDUCATION FINANCING

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-Walkerville): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Education Quality Improvement Act, Bill 160, will do irreparable harm to Ontario's elementary and secondary schools; and

"Whereas Bill 160 centralizes control over education in Ontario in the hands of the provincial government; and

"Whereas the input of students, teachers and parents is crucial to maintaining and improving the quality of Ontario schools; and

"Whereas the provincial government of Ontario has confirmed its plans to cut further funding from education in Ontario; and

"Whereas students have demonstrated their opposition to the direction taken by the government in Ontario in regard to the education policy;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to halt passage of the Education Quality Improvement Act, Bill 160, and to maintain or

increase funding to Ontario's elementary and secondary schools."

I proudly affix my signature to this petition.

FINANCEMENT DE L'ÉDUCATION

M^{me} Shelley Martel (Sudbury-Est) : J'ai une pétition à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario :

«Attendu que Mike Harris et John Snobelen avaient promis de ne pas apporter des coupures dans l'éducation au niveau de la salle de classe, et que depuis leur élection, le gouvernement Harris a sabré plus de 430 \$ millions dans les budgets des conseils scolaires, ce qui représente près d'un milliard de dollars supprimé du secteur de l'éducation publique sur une base annuelle ; et

«Attendu que nos enfants ont déjà perdu 50 % du financement accordé à l'éducation spéciale, ainsi que les bibliothécaires et, dans certaines régions, les maternelles, et que de nombreuses écoles ont perdu leurs programmes de musique, et que le nombre d'élèves dans chaque classe a augmenté sensiblement — certaines écoles vont même perdre leurs autobus scolaires ; et

«Attendu que les parents à l'échelle de l'Ontario savent que la majorité des changements apportés au secteur de l'éducation ont pour but de supprimer un milliard de dollars des dépenses du gouvernement pour financer sa réduction d'impôts ; et

«Attendu que les parents savent que ces coupures affectent l'éducation dans les salles de classe et la qualité de l'éducation de leurs enfants ; et

«Attendu que les parents savent qu'ils n'ont pas été consultés ;

«Nous, soussignés, exhortons Mike Harris à cesser ces coupures qui affectent l'éducation et l'avenir de nos enfants.»

Cette pétition est signée par 12 électeurs dans la circonscription de Sudbury-Est, et je suis en accord avec eux.

ABORTION

Mr Ted Arnott (Wellington): I'm presenting this petition on behalf of the member for Waterloo North, who of course is precluded from presenting petitions in this House. It reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario health system is overburdened and unnecessary spending must be cut; and

"Whereas pregnancy is not a disease, illness or injury and abortions are not therapeutic procedures; and

"Whereas the vast majority of abortions are done for reasons of convenience or finance; and

"Whereas the province has the exclusive authority to determine what services will be insured; and

"Whereas the Canada Health Act does not require funding for elective procedures; and

"Whereas there is mounting evidence that abortion is in fact hazardous to women's health; and

"Whereas Ontario taxpayers funded over 45,000 abortions in 1993 at an estimated cost of \$25 million;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to cease from providing any taxpayers' dollars for the performance of abortions."

CERTIFIED GENERAL ACCOUNTANTS

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex South): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas it is in the best interests of the public to have open market competition among professional accountants; and

"Whereas, under the Public Accountancy Act, only chartered accountants have full access to public accounting licences in the province of Ontario; and

"Whereas the province of Ontario restricts certified general accountants more than any other province, with the exception of Prince Edward Island; and

"Whereas certified general accountants, whose training is identical to that of certified general accountants in the province of Ontario, have a statutory right to practise public accounting in the provinces of Alberta, British Columbia, New Brunswick and Newfoundland, are free to practise in the provinces of Saskatchewan and Manitoba, can be licensed to practise in Nova Scotia and have considerable public accountancy rights in the province of Quebec; and

"Whereas this has created a monopoly in the province of Ontario since 1962 that is not only unfair to the public but also results in additional expenses, particularly to small business owners; and

"Whereas the monopoly results in NAFTA inequalities for certified general accountants in the province of Ontario; and

"Whereas according full professional rights to certified general accountants would lower costs to business by creating competition in accounting and auditing services, which is consistent with the current government's initiative to introduce measures designed to reduce government interference in the private and business lives of Ontario residents; and

"Whereas certified general accountants in the province of Ontario are qualified professionals whose governing body delivers a rigorous and demanding program of professional studies, examines for professional competency, requires practical experience to qualify individuals as certified general accountants, has an established code of ethics and rules of professional conduct and an accompanying disciplinary process to ensure that the standards of the profession are maintained and that the interests of the public are protected; and

"Whereas the Professional Organizations Committee rejected the notion of a monopoly over licensed practices for chartered accountants and specifically supported and recommended the extension of public accounting licences to certified general accountants with experience in the field of public accounting;

"We, the undersigned residents of the province of Ontario, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to grant the Certified General Accountants Association of Ontario their request for overdue amendments to the Public Accountancy Act to allow certified general accountants full access to public practice licences and to eliminate the present monopoly."

I affix my signature to these petitions.

EDUCATION FINANCING

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): I have a petition signed by approximately 50 people from the London area.

"Whereas the government of Ontario has not listened to the public on Bill 160; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario has chosen to overtly deceive the people of Ontario as to the true objectives of Bill 160; and

"Whereas we, the people, believe that no government has a mandate to act in isolation of the wishes of the electorate of this province and we have lost confidence in this government;

"We, the undersigned electors of Ontario, petition the Lieutenant Governor to dissolve the Legislature and call a general election forthwith."

I am pleased to sign this petition.

TRAFFIC CONTROL

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean): I have a petition presented to me by John and Claire Callender of Nepean, with 140 signatures, which reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the volume of traffic travelling along the Queensway between Highway 416 and Moodie Drive has grown steadily in recent years due to population and industrial growth of Kanata, the addition of a third lane to Moodie Drive, the recent expansions of both Nortel and Newbridge, the evolution of the Corel Centre into the home of the Ottawa Senators and Ottawa's premier entertainment arena, and the opening of Highway 416 as a primary route connecting Ottawa to Highway 401; and

"Whereas this increased volume of traffic is producing levels of noise which are disturbing local residents both during the day and the night;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to continue to develop the roadways along this section of the Queensway in order to accommodate the increased volumes of traffic, but to couple this development with measures, including the extension of a berm along the north side of the Queensway in the Crystal Beach area to mitigate the negative aspects caused by this traffic."

Because I'm in complete agreement, I have signed my own name thereto.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

FAIRNESS FOR PARENTS AND EMPLOYEES ACT (TEACHERS' WITHDRAWAL OF SERVICES), 1997

LOI DE 1997 SUR LE TRAITEMENT ÉQUITABLE DES PARENTS ET DES EMPLOYÉS (RETRAIT DE SERVICES PAR LES ENSEIGNANTS)

Resuming the adjourned debate on the motion for second reading of Bill 161, An Act to provide fairness for parents and employees by providing remedies relating to the province-wide withdrawal of services by teachers between October 27 and November 7, 1997 and to make a complementary amendment to the Education Act / Projet de loi 161, Loi favorisant le traitement équitable des parents et des employés en prévoyant des recours à la suite du retrait de services par les enseignants à l'échelle de la province entre le 27 octobre et le 7 novembre 1997 et apportant une modification complémentaire à la Loi sur l'éducation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Pursuant to the order of the House dated December 2, 1997, I am now required to put the question.

Mr Flaherty has moved second reading of Bill 161. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1555 to 1600.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Members take their seats. All those in favour of the motion, please rise one at a time.

Ayes

Amott, Ted	Guzzo, Garry J.	Parker, John L.
Baird, John R.	Hardeman, Ernie	Pettit, Trevor
Barrett, Toby	Hastings, John	Preston, Peter
Bassett, Isabel	Hodgson, Chris	Rollins, E.J. Douglas
Beaubien, Marcel	Hudak, Tim	Ross, Lillian
Boushy, Dave	Johns, Helen	Runciman, Robert W.
Brown, Jim	Johnson, Bert	Saunderson, William
Carr, Gary	Johnson, David	Sheehan, Frank
Carroll, Jack	Jordan, W. Leo	Skarica, Toni
Chudleigh, Ted	Kells, Morley	Smith, Bruce
Cunningham, Dianne	Klees, Frank	Spina, Joseph
Doyle, Ed	Leach, Al	Tascona, Joseph N.
Ecker, Janet	Leadston, Gary L.	Tilson, David
Elliott, Brenda	Marland, Margaret	Tumbull, David
Fisher, Barbara	Martiniuk, Gerry	Vankoughnet, Bill
Flaherty, Jim	Maves, Bart	Villeneuve, Noble
Ford, Douglas B.	Munro, Julia	Wetlaufer, Wayne
Fox, Gary	Murdoch, Bill	Wilson, Jim
Froese, Tom	Mushinski, Marilyn	Witmer, Elizabeth
Galt, Doug	Newman, Dan	Wood, Bob
Gilchrist, Steve	O'Toole, John	Young, Terence H.
Grimmett, Bill	Ouellette, Jerry J.	

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed, please rise one at a time.

Nays

Bradley, James J.	Gerretsen, John	McLeod, Lyn
Colle, Mike	Grandmaître, Bernard	Phillips, Gerry
Duncan, Dwight	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Sergio, Mario

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 65; the nays are 9.

The Deputy Speaker: The motion carries.

FAIRNESS FOR PARENTS AND EMPLOYEES ACT (TEACHERS' WITHDRAWAL OF SERVICES), 1997

LOI DE 1997 SUR LE TRAITEMENT ÉQUITABLE DES PARENTS ET DES EMPLOYÉS (RETRAIT DE SERVICES PAR LES ENSEIGNANTS)

Mr Flaherty moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 161, An Act to provide fairness for parents and employees by providing remedies relating to the province-wide withdrawal of services by teachers between October 27 and November 7, 1997 and to make a complementary amendment to the Education Act / Projet de loi 161, Loi favorisant le traitement équitable des parents et des employés en prévoyant des recours à la suite du retrait de services par les enseignants à l'échelle de la province entre le 27 octobre et le 7 novembre 1997 et apportant une modification complémentaire à la Loi sur l'éducation.

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): On a point of order, Speaker: I believe there has been three-party agreement to split the time available on the clock for third reading.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Order, please. Could I ask the members to please have their meetings outside or take their seats. The member for Niagara Falls.

Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls): It will be interesting to see the Hansard, because apparently my wife voted before I did today in the Legislature. She'll find that interesting.

It pleases me to stand today and talk about third reading of Bill 161, the Fairness for Parents and Employees Act. As many people throughout Ontario know already, this act does three things: It gives a payment to parents for their inconvenience suffered during the recent illegal teachers' strike; it provides protection for employees against any discipline by employers if those parents of children affected by the strike needed to miss work or needed to be late for work, and it also protects teachers from union reprisals if those teachers, of their own conscience, decided to go to work that day or didn't

do something which their union leaders had asked them to do. I think it's a very important bill.

The vote we just had was very interesting, because I saw in the Thunder Bay Chronicle just November 26 that they had interviewed the member from Thunder Bay:

"McLeod said Tuesday she doesn't begrudge the rebate, just its timing. The province hinted at a rebate during the strike.

"It was a way of saying to parents: 'Don't worry, we'll compensate you for any inconvenience or cost.'"

Yes, it is. I was surprised that after saying she didn't begrudge the rebate, this afternoon she voted against this bill.

I think I should say now, before I forget, that I will be trying to split my time, my 40 minutes, with Mr Tilson, the member for Dufferin-Peel, and the member for Sarnia, Mr Boushy.

In speaking to the bill, in the first stage of the bill, the first thing the bill does is provide for payment to parents or guardians. As most people know, this bill will provide for a payment of up to \$40 per family for each day that an eligible child was unable to attend school because of the strike. This means a maximum of \$400 for families whose children could not go to school for the full 10-day period of the strike. The section would also apply if children were unable to attend school because transportation, for example a school bus, was not available or if special education programs or services for special needs children were not available, and if children did not attend school because, in the parents' opinion, they would not have been safely supervised at a school or school-based child care centre or nursery school.

The payment is available to affected parents and guardians, including those mothers and fathers who would normally stay at home, those who had to enlist relatives to help them, and parents who are themselves students in colleges or enrolled in training courses but were forced to miss classes during the strike in order to look after their children.

For the purposes of this legislation, "eligible child" refers to — folks should know this — school children 13 years of age or younger, children in child care facilities or day nurseries located in schools that were closed due to the teachers' action or special needs students in secondary schools.

The money for these payments, folks at home also should know, would come from the savings school boards have accumulated as a result of not having to pay striking teachers who did not go to work. Under Bill 161, the school boards will have the following responsibilities: identifying the appropriate school days, determining if students were prevented from attending classes because of the strike and administering the payment to eligible households. School boards will be responsible for ensuring that parents receive payment. I urge all members to support speedy passage of this bill so that parents and guardians can immediately apply for payment through their children's schools and school boards.

During the debate we have had up to now on this, some of the members on the opposite side of the aisle have complained that no receipts are being asked of parents when they're going to get these payments. I have said on one occasion, and I'll state again today that the government trusts parents to file for the compensation that they rightly deserve. That's the number one thing.

The number two thing is in many cases people may have incurred costs that they wouldn't have receipts for. As I have said in the House before, perhaps someone would drive a good distance to drop their kids off at a grandparent's house or something to that effect. Obviously the grandparent wouldn't be giving a bill to the parent for looking after the children, or the parent wouldn't have a receipt for those kilometres driven and so on and so forth. It will become a bureaucratic nightmare. So we've decided this would be an entitlement.

Last, I think it should be noted that within the bill it is an offence to try to file for more than a parent is eligible to receive.

1610

As I said, I was surprised that the member for Thunder Bay and nine of the Liberal members who were here to vote voted against this bill as they have said in the past that they were actually in favour of the idea of this rebate. On the other hand, it doesn't surprise me because if you look at the history of the party, look back at their red book and look at how they voted on other items in this House, you can see there is actually quite a consistency of voting against things that they actually ran on a platform of doing.

For instance, the creation of a College of Teachers was something they had in there which we have done. We've heard a lot of complaints on that side of the aisle about standardized testing, which they called for. Even though now we've brought standardized testing in, we've heard several complaints.

If I read right from the red book, I see that they said, "We must make sure that we are getting value for our dollar." Well, that's exactly what this government has been saying we're trying to do within the education system. "As much as possible, our education dollars must be spent on classroom learning rather than administration." Again, we agree with that. That's something we've tried to achieve up to now and we think Bill 160 will help us achieve further.

Some other things they said in the red book: "The creation of a provincial core curriculum will help save money by eliminating the need for individual boards of education to develop their own core curriculums." Agreed and done. "So too will the establishment of local school councils, which will help shift decision-making out of the hands of bureaucracies and into the hands of parents." Again, in 160 we have put these school councils in legislation, so something they called for we have actually put in this bill.

I continue reading from the red book and what they asked for: "A Liberal government will further cut spending on administration and get rid of waste and

duplication." How would they do that? "By reducing the number of trustees, placing a cap on the salaries of trustees, and recognizing the part-time nature of the job." Done, again, on this side of the aisle.

How else would they do that? The Liberals said they would do it by "clearly defining the role of school boards, publishing guidelines for spending on administration, and asking boards to publish an annual 'report card' comparing their administrative spending with provincial guidelines." Well, that's also going to be done through the new funding formula and through Bill 160, where we will now have one form of reporting. People won't use different definitions throughout the province; boards won't use different definitions of what's administration and what's not. So again something asked for in the Liberal red book has been done on this side of the aisle.

Finally, the Liberals said in their red book that they would reduce spending in education by "encouraging school boards to increase efficiency and reduce costs by sharing expenses and looking for opportunities to share services with other public sector institutions." Again, we had already started that process and that's going to be enhanced with Bill 160.

Yesterday when we talked about the time allocation motion in this House, my friend the member for St Catharines went on at length about a situation — he read from an article in the *Globe* — where he felt that some unelected members, staff people to all intents and purposes, of this government had too much authority. I didn't have a chance then to respond to him, but I would say that I can understand why he's so sensitive to this issue.

If one goes back and looks, there is one particularly good book out there called *Not Without Cause: David Peterson's Fall From Grace*, by Georgette Gagnon and Dan Rath. If one goes back and reads that book and looks at the history, one will find that Mr Bradley, the member for St Catharines, as the environment minister several times had difficulties with the staff in the Liberal Party overruling him and other ministers. Vince Borg, Gord Ashworth and Hershell Ezrin were three of the people who were — I guess Mr Bradley would refer to them as whiz kids in his day.

On a particular page, page 79, you read, if I can quote, "Discontent...crystallized around the Liberals' apparent support for land development at the expense of the environment." A paper came out, "a discussion paper entitled *Reforming Our Land Use and Development System* that seemed to put development ahead of the environment by cutting Bradley's power.... The paper was written without Bradley's knowledge or his ministry's involvement."

So if one reads the history, I understand the member for St Catharines' sensitivity to the role of staff because of some of the experiences he may have had when he was in government. But I can assure him that on this side of the aisle staff provide a service to ministers and to the Premier, but it's not one of telling any members how to vote or actually writing policy.

Mr Wayne Lessard (Windsor-Riverside): Madam Speaker, on a point of order: I don't believe we have a quorum.

The Deputy Speaker: Clerk, can you check and see if there's a quorum?

Clerk at the Table (Mr Todd Decker): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk at the Table: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Member for Niagara Falls.

Mr Maves: As I was saying, the connection to all of this that the member for St Catharines made yesterday when I asked him to make a point back to 161 was that in his opinion this bill wasn't written by ministers or members on this side of aisle. I want to assure him that on this side of the aisle policy is made and policy direction is given from the ministers and from caucus members and not the other way around, from staff, and staff act on that. In his day it may have been different, as this book seems to indicate.

One of the other things I found interesting when I read through this book was — the member for St Catharines is very pessimistic about the future of education. He's not happy with 161, he's not happy with 160. I read again on page 103 of this book where it says, back in the days of 1987 and 1990, "Bradley's peers were accustomed to his pessimism." We on this side of the aisle have become accustomed to that same pessimism. "Colleagues respected Bradley's political nose but saw him as a perpetual prophet of doom."

That really rings true in this House from things we hear from the member for St Catharines. One quote here is: "'You give him a story, he can tell you everything that's going to go wrong, everything, because he's paranoid,' said one minister. Chaviva Hošek likened him to 'the canaries that they used to take down in the mines: when they stopped breathing, you'd know you were dead.'"

I think people at home should understand that the member for St Catharines, an honourable member he is, but he does have a history even among his own party members of being somewhat pessimistic and having a somewhat pessimistic outlook.

We on this side of the aisle have a much more optimistic outlook and believe that the changes we're bringing to education in Ontario through Bill 160 and the things we're doing in Bill 161 are going to have a very positive impact on the education system and on parents who suffered during the strike. I hope the member for St Catharines hasn't soured too many people by that attitude. They should know, and I thought I would mention, that there is that history there of that little bit of a pessimistic attitude. I know he's very optimistic about his Buffalo Sabres, as I am too, and we chat about that quite often, but about other things political he can sometimes be quite pessimistic.

I really should shorten my comments on 161 because I know, as I said, the member for Dufferin-Peel is going to speak today also, and the member for Sarnia, and I want to leave them some time.

The bill, as I said, has three very important components: the payment to the parents for the inconvenience they've suffered, the \$40 a day, as it has become known as; the protection for employees against discipline by employers if they had to miss work; and the prohibition for teachers' unions to have reprisals against members who didn't follow their dictates. I think that's essential. I had several teachers call me during that period of time with many concerns about post-strike activity, and I think they'll be much more confident going back to work now, on the passage of Bill 161. I'm going to support the bill, and I encourage the rest of the members of the House to do the same.

1620

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate? If I could just clarify, because we've agreed in the House to share the time, split it three ways, we will rotate. There will be no questions and comments, and we will rotate.

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William): I will also be dividing my time with my colleague the member for Oriole.

I'm pleased to be rising to speak in this debate. Having just had second reading of this bill, we will of course have a very limited period of debate on third reading, with a third reading vote to be called this afternoon.

I'm not surprised that the government has time-allocated yet another bill. We're seeing this government use time allocation more than any other government in history. I'm not surprised they have limited the time on Bill 161, because I recognize the fact that we have actually had, or will have had by the time we vote this evening, as much time debating what should be a relatively simple bill — in theory it should be a simple bill — as we had to debate the entire omnibus Bill 160, which brought in such sweeping, fundamental changes to Ontario's education system.

I am still concerned about the time allocation motion on Bill 161 which this government forced through yesterday, because even this relatively simple bill requires some amendment, leaves some unanswered questions. As the members of the third party, along with ourselves, argued yesterday, it would have been appropriate to have seen this bill go to committee for clause-by-clause consideration, for some further discussion of the areas in which there is, to say the least, a lack of clarity. But that doesn't serve the government's purposes, so indeed we have second reading today. We have no committee and there is no chance to resolve the unanswered questions or to propose amendments, which I know the third party was anxious to propose. We'll be forced into making a decision on this bill on third reading this afternoon.

This government clearly is not a fan of committee hearings or clause-by-clause consideration in any event. I only need to refer back to the process by which we considered Bill 160, the omnibus bill, for evidence of that. Bill 160, of course, was essentially cut off in the clause-by-clause hearings, cut off at a point when most of the bill was not even considered, and at which the government's own amendments to that bill were voted on, as were the

opposition amendments, without even being read because we had reached the magic hour of 5 o'clock. Following the magic hour of 5 o'clock there had to be a simple vote without any reading of the amendments.

The government needs to rethink the way in which it forces through its bills with limited time, because the government itself was in a bind on Bill 160. They were in a bind to put together their own amendments, because their own amendments came in late. In fact, their amendments came in late enough that four of their amendments could not be considered and had to be withdrawn. At some future point in time, we're undoubtedly going to see new legislation that brings forward the amendments the government knew it needed to fix the mistakes it had already made in Bill 160.

We know their amendments were presented in such a way that in one case there was one page of an amendment on an important issue of education development charges and the second page of the amendment was missing. The government tried to introduce it in the committee stage but got caught in their own time allocation motion. That very important amendment on education development charges was not able to proceed, which is why the Urban Development Institute, in commenting on Bill 160, says, "Recent events have caused our organization to join the chorus of those saying that this bill lacks proper consultation, has been hastily drafted and presents a negative impact." That's the nature of what happens to legislation when it is forced through on a time allocation motion without due process for consideration in committee.

That again is happening on this seemingly much simpler bill, Bill 161. There are parts of Bill 161 that I will tell you quite openly we can agree with. In fact, there are parts of Bill 161 that we wish could be separated out from the bill itself so that we could provide our clear and unequivocal support, and that is for at least the concept of families receiving compensation for any child care expenses or out-of-pocket expenses they incurred during the period of time that teachers were out of the classroom and students clearly were out of the classroom. That's a part of the bill with which we can agree conceptually.

If we had had more time on this bill, if the government had been more forthcoming, if there had been an opportunity to discuss this bill in committee, we might have been able to find out answers to some of the unanswered questions, however, about even the concept of paying families for their child care or out-of-pocket expenses. Unfortunately, we're not going to have that opportunity.

If we had had an opportunity for some discussion in committee, we might have found out the government's rationale for presenting a bill that puts forward a concept which we are in agreement with, a concept of compensating families for out-of-pocket or child care expenses, and why the government that puts forward legislation with that concept embodied in it is not sufficiently committed to the idea to suggest that it continue when there are future disruptions in educational service to students. It's quite clear the government has no intention of extending this

concept to other strike situations. In fact, perhaps somewhat surprisingly, the government has said that those families in York region who in the second week of the teacher protest were actually caught up in a legal strike will not receive compensation for the period of time in which their teachers were on a legal strike.

I suggest to you that if a government really believes in the principle of extending compensation to families for out-of-pocket expenses incurred when the services to their children are disrupted, then that same government would not limit this bill in such a way that those families in York region whose children were out of school for the full two weeks will only get compensation for a one-week period. That's a part of the bill we disagree with.

A further part of the bill that we disagree with is that it is absolutely clear that this same kind of compensation will not again be extended to families whose educational service for children is disrupted. That raises another concern we have with the bill. In the past, if there was a disruption in teachers' services through a strike or lockout and the salaries were therefore saved for the period of time of that disruption of service, the dollars the board saved in such a situation were to be put into a reserve fund, and at the end of the year those funds would be returned to the local taxpayer.

What does Bill 161 say will happen in any future disruption-of-service situation? It says that the money saved will go into a reserve fund, but that's the end of the legislation. No longer is there a requirement for the government to return that money to the local taxpayer now that the government controls the dollars.

The whole idea was that if local services are lost, the local taxpayer should be compensated. The government could do that. They're still raising \$6 billion from the local taxpayers for educational purposes. They could return those dollars saved with the disruption of service to the local taxpayer, but they're not going to, because the government wants to get hold of the money. They are not going to return it to families, as they are doing to compensate for the out-of-pocket expenses families incurred during the teachers' protest. They're not going to extend that same compensation to families in any future situation. The government is simply going to keep that money for itself.

Even as we support the concept of families receiving compensation, we can call on this government to amend their own legislation so that the same principle is carried forward in future situations rather than restricting it simply to the public relations statement that this government felt the need to make at the very outset of the teachers' protest. The sheer hypocrisy of making this statement at the beginning of the teachers' protest and then restricting the application of the principle only to that period of time and not extending the same principle to any future situation is really quite astounding. But then this government always has its eye to where they can get some additional money to put into their reserves so their commitments can be met with something that doesn't interfere with their ability to deliver the tax cut — always an eye to where they can get some dollars.

1630

There's another part of Bill 161 which we do agree with and wish we could separate out, so we could support it. That's the part of Bill 161 which ensures that no employee who was required to take time off work to provide child care meets with any kind of retribution from their employer. As I said during my speech on second reading debate, I think the government itself may have been guilty of at least intimidation, if not outright punishment, of employees who took time off. Perhaps this part of the bill is needed to make sure the government as an employer does not take any retribution against its own employees. That part of the bill we can agree with.

A part of the bill we totally disagree with is the necessity of having a section of this bill to deal with reprisals of teachers against fellow teachers who did not participate in the walkout. That is purely and simply a gratuitous hit at teachers, who have made it very clear from the beginning that there would be no reprisal action taken against colleagues who chose not to support the protest.

If indeed the government didn't trust teachers to act on their word, the government knows full well that any teacher who felt there had been a reprisal taken by colleagues against them would have access to the Ontario Labour Relations Board after January 1 in order to have that addressed.

It is quite amazing that on a bill that is relatively simple, there should still be such a host of unanswered questions. This is also troubling: unanswered questions even about the one part of the bill which we feel is supportable in principle. The unanswered questions —

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): Point of order, Madam Speaker: I also have an unanswered question, and that is whether in fact we have a quorum.

The Deputy Speaker: Clerk, could you check and see if there's a quorum.

Clerk at the Table: A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk at the Table: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Member for Fort William.

Mrs McLeod: I was just saying it seems surprising that in a relatively simple bill there should be such a host of unanswered questions, yet maybe that's not surprising, because we know that the goal of this government was to make a public relations message. They wanted public support for what was going to be a tough stand they were going to take against teachers during this protest.

They didn't want to resolve the issues; they wanted to be able to take a tough stand. They thought they could win by taking on the teachers. They didn't. But they had to take a tough stand in any event, because they needed Bill 160 by January 1 — not simply to deliver the transitional issues related to the amalgamation of school boards but to deliver on a tax cut payment due January 1, and the government needed to take control of educational financing so they could make the kinds of cuts they needed to deliver on that tax cut.

The government was going to take a tough stand; they weren't going to be interested in resolving the concerns or the issues that were being raised by teachers or by parents, so they thought they could buy public acquiescence by offering compensation to families in saying, "Don't worry, we'll help you to recover any lost dollars you may incur as a result of us refusing to deal with the issues that would ensure that teachers could be back in the classrooms and that students could be returning to school."

The Minister of Labour said they did this to reassure parents. I can tell you I have not talked to any parents who were reassured by this government's dealings with either the teacher protest or with Bill 160 itself. I have talked to a lot of parents who said they are not reassured by a \$40-a-day payment; that it is in no way going to protect junior kindergarten programs for their children against this government's attack on junior kindergarten; that it is in no way going to protect special education programs for their children as this government's cuts to education force the gutting of all the support services that special needs students need; that it is in no way going to ensure that class sizes will be smaller, as the government would like people to believe, when in fact the government's legislation, Bill 160, enshrines the status quo for class size and means that class sizes will continue to be in some cases as large as 35 or 36 or 40. Parents are not reassured that the \$40-a-day payment is going to answer the very real concerns they have about this government's agenda for education or the impact of Bill 160.

It's ironic that even the \$40 a day per family is not sufficient to address the real child care expenses that families who incurred expenses would have had to meet, because it is of course not a per child payment; it is a per family payment. It's not at this point directed to child care expenses; it is directed simply as a payment to families who have a child or children 13 years or younger. That can change, because the legislation has a basket clause giving the Minister of Education yet again the power to make any decisions or directives or regulations he chooses in order to implement the intent of this act.

This is exactly why this bill should have gone to committee for further consideration and for further clarification, so that we could determine whether the government is serious about actually compensating families for out-of-pocket expenses and child care expenses or whether this is nothing more than a simple gesture for public relations purposes.

I guess it shouldn't surprise me that one of the unanswered questions is how much this is actually going to cost. There are no answers for families as to whether or not it's going to meet child care expenses; clearly it's not, if you have more than one child and you were having to pay for child care expenses for those children. It doesn't answer the families' out-of-pocket expenses concerns. Nor does it answer the question that school boards have about whether or not the payment of that \$40 a day is going to be fully recoverable from any savings school boards had as a result of the two-week protest.

This should have been made clear, that the government will cover all administrative costs as well as any costs

over and above the savings boards experienced that the boards then have to pay out in keeping the government's commitment to the \$40 a day. I raised this question with the Minister of Education in the House today. I think I almost got a, "Yes, the government will cover all the costs of this beyond any savings which the board may have had," but I would have liked to have that clearly established for the record so that school boards could then hold this government accountable, to ensure that the keeping of this government's commitment doesn't come out of budgets that are intended to provide dollars for school supplies or for school maintenance.

It shouldn't surprise me either, I guess, that this government puts forward a bill which is basically a public relations statement, without having worried about how much it is going to cost or how it is actually going to work. We have seen from this government so much cynicism in the way in which they will pursue their fundamental agenda of delivering the tax cut at any cost, and how they will put millions of dollars into a public relations campaign intended to camouflage the real agenda and to attempt to persuade the public to support what they are doing.

The fact that they haven't been able to figure out how this works is not a primary concern for them. The question of what the real cost or the real impact of their legislation will be is something they're going to deal with later, always later, because their primary goal is to deliver the tax cut and to deliver a public relations message that will camouflage the real goals of this government.

1640

As I say, I shouldn't be surprised but I am surprised at how there can be so many unanswered questions about such a simple bill. I found myself looking back and realizing that everything we've been doing in the House this week is a result of the government determined to deliver its tax cut, determined to get control over educational financing in order to make cuts that would allow it to deliver its tax cut, having then to download social services on to communities in order to make up for the revenue the government was going to have to put into education when it took education off the property tax, except of course it found it couldn't take education off the property tax because it couldn't download all the social services it wanted to.

We spent a whole week last January with the government making a public relations statement to try and get a positive message out to cover its real agenda, which was to get control of educational financing to deliver a tax cut. We've spent the rest of the year since last January with the government backtracking and changing and shifting and entangling our property tax situation to the point where it can never be untangled, this week passing at least three bills intended to try and fulfil the poorly thought out public relations statement the government made this last January.

If this government was truly concerned about parents, about students, about families, it might have responded to the very real concerns parents have. If the government had been truly concerned, they would not have been solely

interested in making a public relations statement that would allow them to continue to take a tough stand against teachers rather than to resolve the issues. If this government was truly concerned about education this would not have been their sole response to the concerns that were raised not only by 126,000 teachers but by hundreds of thousands of parents subsequent to that.

If this government was truly concerned about good policy, about the kinds of relationships that would allow us to establish a basis for real improvements in our educational system, it would not have focused all of its efforts subsequent to that teacher protest with some of the most vicious attacks that we have seen in the history of Ontario governments, a vicious advertising campaign intended to demean and to demoralize those who opposed it, a vicious attack on the principals and vice-principals who dared to stand up with teachers in opposing this government's agenda, and even a vicious attack, I believe, on parents, perhaps because parents sided in so many cases with the teachers in their concerns for public education in the future or perhaps simply because the government saw a chance to advance its real agenda two more steps in being able to slip in its very dangerous amendments making parent councils less than advisory under the cover of the general anger over this bill.

I wonder what all of this says about the Mike Harris government. I begin by asking where the conscience is of a government that throughout this entire process has been willing to sacrifice the wellbeing of 2.1 million students to achieve a tax cut for our most well-to-do citizens. I wonder what it says about our government that it would hold a workshop on messaging around educational change as our educational system was on the verge of a massive protest that would shut down our schools. That was the theme of a workshop at the Tory convention in London, where Paul Rhodes, the former press secretary to the Premier, told the delegates that Bill 160 was about control, but he said, "Clearly we're not going to talk about that."

I wonder where the sense is of public responsibility in a government that puts its Premier on television on the eve of a crisis, not to reassure the public but to spread his propaganda while the unfairness of what he was spinning further enflamed teachers. How would you describe the integrity and the sense of responsibility of a government that tries to build public support by doing everything it can to convince the public that our educational system is broken?

In its attack on education, in its claims to be wanting to improve the quality of education when in fact its goal is clearly to take dollars and teachers out of the education system, in its claims that it is going to bring about reforms to the education system when clearly you cannot bring about positive change to education when you make enemies of the teachers who are to deliver that educational change, this government has been sending a public message that simply is not based on the realities of what is happening in our classrooms today and what is going to happen as a consequence of this government's attack on

education. Parents understand that. That's why we have been flooded with the protests of hundreds of thousands of concerned parents.

I say again, if this government was serious about the wellbeing of students, seriously concerned about the interests of parents and families, it would respond to the very real concerns of parents. This bill, which will be passed today, is not going to answer the concerns that parents have expressed and it is not in any way going to compensate not only for the price that was paid by many families during that two-week protest but for the ongoing price that will be paid by students as this government continues to dismantle the public education system in Ontario.

Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East): It's my understanding that we continue next in rotation. I'll be sharing my time with the member for Welland-Thorold.

I join this debate today and I'd be hard-pressed to say that I'm pleased to be here to participate because that would be completely untrue. I am very concerned about the bill the government has put forward because I see in it a complete contradiction of what the government has done to other citizens in this province, what it has done to kids in other circumstances and what it is trying to do now with respect to parents and kids in a blatant effort to try and do damage control around Bill 160. This is what this bill is all about.

The government has had no end of bad publicity, bad press, hard feelings from the majority of people out there who oppose the government's agenda on education and who oppose Bill 160. What I believe they're trying to do through the bill is some damage control around that in hopes of trying to garner some support from some of those same folks who have said, "We don't like where you're heading and we don't want anything to do with it." But it's the contradictions in a number of places in the bill which has me most concerned. I want to address those today in my remarks.

First, this is a government which has spent much time in the last two years with its spin doctors to talk about accountability and to try and convince the public that it is a government which is interested in accountability, which is going to ensure that we have accountability with respect to the use of taxpayers' money. They have spent no end of time trying to do that, particularly when it comes to social assistance, and I want to begin with that example.

Here is a government that has been quite proud, on more than one occasion, talking about all of the efforts it is making to deal with welfare fraud and to ensure that the public gets value for money when it comes to welfare payments. It's a government that was fully prepared to put in a snitch line so that people could call in on their neighbours if they believed they were abusing the system. It is a government that, through its Ontario Works legislation, has now given itself the power to fingerprint social assistance recipients and categorize them in some fashion by doing that as some form of cheats or people who would abuse the system willingly. It's a government that allowed, for example, the new chair and CEO at the

Workers' Compensation Board, over at that institution, to also establish a snitch line so that people could, if they wanted to, report on their neighbours if they believed they were abusing that system.

It's a government that has spent a great deal of money and a great deal of effort and a great deal of time communicating to the public that it is taking every step necessary to ensure we get value for money by undertaking all of these initiatives. The contradiction I see in this bill from a government that is prepared to have snitch lines for welfare recipients, snitch lines for WCB recipients and to give itself the power to fingerprint social assistance recipients is now a government that says, "We can't trust any of those parents, but we're going to trust parents who have children who suffered a destruction," during the political protest, the teachers' political protest, "and we will reimburse those parents," no receipts required, no information necessary, no evidence to be provided that child care was actually needed and actually paid for.

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It really makes me sick to think that the government can discriminate in one way against a whole portion of our population with kids by talking about accountability and talking about the need for snitch lines and fingerprinting, and on the other hand can say with respect to this issue, "We trust parents." Well, you know what? If you're good enough to trust these parents, you should be good enough to trust all parents, regardless of whether or not they have to use WCB or have to use FBA. It's not good enough to bring legislation into this House and say: "We're going to compensate people. We trust them. They're not going to have to provide receipts to get their \$40 a day. But for other people in our society who receive government money or who have to receive WCB when they get hurt, they're cheats and they're frauds, and we want no end of proof and evidence that they need to receive those payments."

I find it really appalling that the government sets up that kind of division in our society, that the government can trust one set of parents on one hand but not trust other parents on the other hand because they happen to be in receipt of social assistance or WCB. I am really disturbed that the government members would think it's okay to bring forward a bill that allows that kind of division to happen, that emphasizes, that reinforces, that promotes that kind of division. This from a government that claims to be accountable.

The second serious contradiction I see in the legislation is the sudden concern this government has for kids who need child care. All of a sudden, through this legislation, this government proclaims to the rest of us that they have such great concerns around child care and they're going to compensate those parents who needed child care during the political protest.

I remind you that this is a government that didn't think there was much priority around child care and child care spaces when one of the first acts it took was to cancel all the child care spaces that had been funded 100% by our government to allow Jobs Ontario Training to go on as a program. The government didn't have much concern about

all those parents who were using those spaces so they could participate in training in private sector employer workplaces and get off the system and get into employment on a full-time basis. The government didn't worry about cancelling those spaces for those kids, for those parents who were trying to get a start again in the workforce — no problem at all. We lost thousands of spaces across this province directly as a result of that action by this government.

This is a government that pretends to care about child care and provision of the same, but in Bill 160 clearly has said that the government will no longer provide capital funds to build child care spaces in new schools in this province, something our government did, something I was proud to be a part of. We made it clear that in new schools that were being built, space had to be set aside, paid for by the province, to establish child care centres so that young students or even adult students who wanted to return to get their grade 12 or wanted to complete their education would not have to worry about where they were going to obtain and how they were going to pay for that child care. They would have that provided onsite, and they could have some comfort knowing their children were being looked after when they were attending school to try and finish their education. This is the government that has cancelled capital funding for new child care centres to be built with new schools being built. How much concern does that demonstrate for child care spaces?

This is a government whose Minister of Community and Social Services put forward a report on child care which will have the effect of severely curtailing, limiting or decreasing health and safety standards in child care centres, where things like fencing and natural light aren't important any more to this government and where the report itself recommends changes in those very things, decreasing those very standards that all of us thought were secure. In the same report, it's a government that would have even more kids looked after by a single worker than ever before and thus compromise the safety of toddlers and pre-schoolers.

This is a government that through this same report has also decided that it's okay that we take money from child care workers, who are one of the lowest-paid groups in our society, and use that money to provide new subsidies, instead of the government trying to increase the pay of those very workers who look after our children and providing new spaces with new child care funding. The government that suddenly cares so much about child care has a report done by its very own now Comsoc minister which frankly would really destroy the regulated, standardized, formal child care system in this province in favour of a voucher system, where people have to go back to being concerned about unregulated, unlicensed child care.

I have a real problem listening to the government on this bill give me their rhetoric about how concerned they are to make sure that parents get compensated for child care, when every action they've taken on child care has been an attack on the same. I remind you that this is a

government that promised an extra \$200 million over five years for child care in the province in a budget in 1996, and that same government didn't spend one cent of the \$40 million that was allocated for child care in fiscal year 1996-97, not a single cent, even though there is a crying need out there for new spaces and for new subsidized spaces.

It's the same Minister of Finance who made the announcement about the \$200 million who would not guarantee, when the issue was raised by the member for Beaches-Woodbine, that he would then take the \$40 million that he refused to spend last year and roll it in and spend \$80 million this year. No, indeed we're going to have now some kind of tax credit, which parents won't even be able to claim until 1998. That's the commitment of this government on child care.

It's a little bit hard to swallow the government's new-found concern for providing child care and making sure parents have access to child care when all the evidence to date shows that they have done nothing, in fact are moving backwards, when it comes to the provision of child care in this province.

Third, I'm concerned about the contradiction with respect to employer reprisal. The government, through the bill, says it wants to protect parents who had emergency child care needs and who had to leave their place of work or not go in to work during the days of the political protest, to make sure they won't suffer any kind of reprisal from their employer.

The government wants to limit that period to only October 27 to November 7, as if that might be the only time when parents could suffer reprisal from employers because they had emergency child care needs. If it's good enough to protect people from a possible reprisal because you have emergency child care needs during a teachers' political protest, why isn't it good enough to guarantee that to parents all the time? There is no doubt in my mind that any number of parents on any given workday in this province find themselves in that situation, have to leave work or cannot come in to work because on that particular day they have an emergency child care need that cannot be met by a parent or a child care centre or their regular babysitter.

If it's good enough to protect those parents during the political protest, why doesn't that government enshrine in law that when that happens to parents in this province, when they have emergency child care needs, they will not suffer a reprisal from their employer, regardless of when that happens, so that parents will know they will have that protection not only retroactively during the two-week period the teachers were off but that they will have the protection now, enshrined in law? If you care seriously about protecting parents in that way, then the bill should speak to how we do that for parents on an ongoing basis, how we protect them, how we help them meet their child care needs. But no, the government has refused to do that, and the period of grace only extends to the two weeks the teachers were in the midst of their political protest.

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Finally, with respect to the issue of the contradiction that I see between this bill and the government's actions in other areas, I want to deal with the issue of compensation. The government has put the bill forward in the hopes of saying very clearly to people: "We recognize that you had additional costs because of the political protest. We will compensate you for the same because you had needs that had to be met." I remind members of this House of the fiasco created by the Attorney General when he shut down the family support plan overnight, closed the regional offices without any centralized office being in place, up and running to provide service, when overnight he laid off 290 experienced family support plan staff, 85% of the total complement of that operation, and everyone in this House knows, even if they're not prepared to admit it, that thousands and thousands of women and children who used to receive regular family support plan cheques didn't receive them any more. They were lost. They were up in those boxes at Downsview that we saw during our visit there on November 7.

Many, many thousands of women and families suffered as a consequence, had their heat turned off, their hydro turned off, their water turned off, received eviction notices, received penalties from their banks because of late payments. Any number of things happened to these people, and the Attorney General, only after a great deal of pressure in this House because of the evidence of the damage he had caused singlehandedly to all these people, finally had to say, "We will provide some compensation to some of those women who were affected," and he put in place a scheme that would allow some of those women to get compensation for two months only — as if suddenly the chaos ended after November 1996, as if suddenly in November 1996 all those women and all those kids finally started to get their cheques. It was a slap in the face to those women, a complete insult to all who had suffered serious financial loss because of his incompetence and because of his decision that it was more important to fund a tax cut than it was to ensure women and kids got their ongoing support.

This government that is being so magnanimous today, that is going to provide \$40 per family per day without receipts as compensation for hardship, this same government, in the face of the financial distress of thousands and thousands of women across this province, due directly to this government's action, through the incompetence of this Attorney General, provided a mere two months' compensation for those women and children who had to pay all kinds of penalties and charges because their cheques were delayed and they could not make their payments.

I'd like to know how many payments were actually made by this Attorney General, because not only did they limit the compensation to a mere two months, they did absolutely nothing to publicize that people could actually get compensation. There was no legislation passed. The Attorney General didn't even have the decency to do a mailing to family support plan recipients to tell them they

might be entitled and how they could apply. He did nothing, and I'm appalled again at the contradiction between what this government allowed to have happen to thousands and thousands of women and what this government is now prepared to do in the face of a teachers' political protest to try and make amends. It just doesn't add up.

The whole process of dealing with this bill has just been ridiculous. Yesterday the government moved a motion which effectively ended any opportunity for amendments to be put. In the time I have been here, which is 10 years, I have never seen a government move a motion where we could not put amendments to pieces of legislation. No bill is perfect and the government itself from time to time has to bring forward its amendments.

Yesterday this Conservative government decided there didn't have to be any further debate except for third reading; there didn't have to be amendments put. They want this bill out the door as fast as they can. That, no doubt, has to do with the fact that this government finally managed to ram through Bill 160 this week. So again in terms of trying to do damage control around Bill 160, the government is trying to get this bill out the door in the hope that somehow they can assuage the feelings of all those parents out there who believed the teachers were right and who believe that the quality of education is suffering under this government.

I've got to tell you, if you think you're going to be able to buy off people with \$40 a day over two weeks and make them forget about what's happening around Bill 160 or what's happening to the quality of education in this province, you've got another think coming, because this issue and people's concerns about the government agenda on Bill 160 are not going away. The concerns, people's fears, are growing. That is being manifested every day out there in communities by people who continue to demonstrate against this bill, who continue to demonstrate against this government's agenda.

If the government really cared about kids and about families, as they purport to do in this legislation, then the government would do a number of things, first with respect to education and then with respect to a number of broader issues respecting kids and families. If the government really cared about children and education, then the government would put back the money it took out for junior kindergarten and ensure that board after board in this province could provide junior kindergarten to the youngest citizens in our community. Every study has shown, and this was demonstrated again through the Royal Commission on Learning, that the best advantage we can give our kids is to make sure they have an equal and an early start.

It was a shame that this government decided the royal commission's recommendations meant nothing, that all the studies done in other jurisdictions meant nothing and that at the end of the day they were quite prepared to reduce the funding for JK and ensure that across a number of boards they had no choice but to cancel it. Give the money back if you care.

Mr Lessard: On a point of order: I don't believe we have a quorum present.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Could you please check if we have a quorum.

Clerk at the Table: A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Call in the members.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk at the Table: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Sudbury East.

Ms Martel: If the government cared about kids and families, the government would reinstate the early years project, begun under us, to ensure that we had kids in school early so they could get an equal start and a good start regardless of their background.

If they cared about kids at all, they would put back the money for capital for child care, so that in new schools that are being created across this province there will be child care spaces, so that students who have children and want to return and complete their education can do that, knowing that their kids are going to be cared for onsite.

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If the government cared about kids and cared about families, they would say, "No more cuts to education." The Premier would get up and deny that in Veronica Lacey's contract for employment the government intends to take another \$667 million out. The government would stand in its place and say, "Not only will we reinvest any money that we find in savings through some of the initiatives in Bill 104, we guarantee there will be no further cuts to education in this province." That way we might actually be able to protect special ed for some of the kids who need it across our communities.

If the government cared about kids and families, the government would put back the 5% that it took from children's mental health in the last budget. The government would put back the funding that it took from children's aid societies, to try and protect kids who were at risk. The government would put back the 21% that it took from social assistance, which leaves kids now more than ever in deeper poverty, using food banks, living in hostels, in a way that has never been seen in Ontario.

If the government cared about kids and about families, the minister for women's issues would put back the money for counselling at second-stage housing so that women and families who had been abused could be guaranteed access to that counselling.

If the government cared about women and kids, then the government would reopen the offices of the family support plan and hire back the 40% of staff who have been permanently cut so that that outfit could deal adequately with all the people who require support in the province. The problems over there have not gone away. We see it every day in our office.

If the government really cared about kids and children as they allege they do through this bill, the government would look at the whole host of services and programs for children which they have systematically cut or systematically destroyed, and they would reinstate the funds to

protect our youngest citizens in our communities, but the government doesn't want to do that.

This government has no intention of doing that, because this government would rather take that money to help finance the tax cut for its rich friends than protect those same programs and services for our kids. That's what I find so contradictory about the bill that's before us, where the government alleges its concern for kids and for child care, and what the reality is with respect to what the government has done on any number of other programs for kids and for families across this province.

As I said earlier, the government uses this bill in the hope that it can provide some political damage control for Bill 160. As I said earlier, that concern, those fears about Bill 160 and about the overall government agenda, are not going away. People out there recognize that Bill 160 does nothing to improve the quality of education in this province. If you lay off teachers because you have cut prep time, that doesn't make your class sizes smaller. If you allow non-teachers to provide instruction in the class, that's not going to improve your test results. If you allow all control with respect to local decision-making and the setting of the tax rate to be centralized in Toronto, that doesn't help local boards respond to local education needs. People out there know that Bill 160 means more cuts to education, through the bill and through the funding formula that this government refuses yet to reveal to the public. I suspect it is so bad that they want to wait until this House has recessed before that gets released anywhere.

I am very concerned about the bill. I am very concerned that the government moved so that we couldn't even place amendments to the bill that we are dealing with today. But if the government thinks that providing \$40 per family over the days of the political protest is somehow going to make the education issue go away and people's concerns about the quality of education in this province go away, they are sadly mistaken. The teachers' political protest focused on education in a way never before done in this province. People are concerned about public education. They want it protected, and they know another \$667 million worth of cuts next year ain't going to improve the quality of education in this province. They will not be fooled.

Mr David Tilson (Dufferin-Peel): I would like to contribute to the debate on Bill 161. I'd first of all like to talk of one issue that has been raised by both parties on the opposition side, and that is this issue of the allegation that one does not need a receipt to obtain payments to assist parents with respect to day care under this bill. That allegation is simply not true. If one were to look at section 3 of the bill, which has to do with payments to parents and guardians, one will see that to qualify for receiving such a payment you have to make an application and you have to put forward certain information on that application. This is all set out in the bill, if the members had taken the time to read the bill.

If they make a false declaration, the bill says, "A person who knowingly submits false information on an

application for payment is guilty of an offence." Not only that, that's called fraud. If they're found guilty of fraud, they're going to go to jail. The suggestion that the government is just handing over money to anyone who makes an application simply is not true. The procedure that has been put forward by the new Minister of Labour is a most responsible position to assist parents and guardians who have been disadvantaged as a result of this illegal strike action that was taken by the teachers of this province.

The short title of this bill is the Fairness for Parents and Employees Act (Teachers' Withdrawal of Services). The minister is very generous in that, because some people call it a withdrawal of services, some people call it a strike, an illegal strike. I know the members of the opposition and many teachers will say, "There was a court that said it was not an illegal strike," and that's not quite so. That isn't what happened. Notwithstanding that, there are others who will call it civil disobedience, which I find a rather scary proposition which seems to be carrying forward in other union activity. The postal union people are saying that, notwithstanding any back-to-work order, there's going to be disobedience in this country, civil disobedience, which is almost a form of anarchy.

Notwithstanding whether you call it withdrawal of services, an illegal strike, civil disobedience, the fact is that there have been third parties that have been disadvantaged as a result of the action that has been taken by the teachers of this province, or many of the teachers of this province, because not all teachers took that action. It will have an effect on, of course, the children. We'll wait and see whether the time for teaching that was lost has been made up. I know the boards in my riding — I don't know whether all the boards have been cancelling professional development days to enable children to make up the time that was lost.

There have been other issues. Teachers have called my constituency office and have informed me that they have been threatened by their fellow teachers, by members of the teachers' federation, the teachers' union, that if they cross the picket line, there would be repercussions at a later date.

I have had individuals, parents, who have called my office and said, "This has had an effect on my job." If you take off any time from work to look after your children because there's no place for them to go — normally they would go to school, young children in elementary schools at least — this will be a black mark on your job or indeed, if it persists beyond a reasonable period of time, it could result in the loss of your job.

Parents have called me who have been most concerned about the repercussions against children; that if children demonstrate in class, if they wear any form of information that indicates they are in support of Bill 160, there would be repercussions. Children have been asked to take home information in support of Bill 160.

Whether members of the public support or are opposed to Bill 160, this unfortunate incident that has occurred for the period set forth in the bill, October 27 to November 2, 1997, has caused some very serious problems in the

province, and it is those problems this bill wishes to address.

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I had, for example, an elementary school teacher who was afraid to identify herself call my constituency office. She had crossed the picket line on the first day of the strike and was afraid to do it again after the reception she received from fellow teachers, and she was receiving anonymous phone calls. I had a teacher call who, prior to the strike, prepared a program for her class; it was a voluntary program for the school. She was told they were not really interested in the type of program. I don't want to get into too many details because I don't want to identify her. She was told, "We really have no interest in that." Now she's being told, "Get on with that program and do it now or it'll mean a black mark on your job."

We have on the government side an obligation to protect the children of this province, to protect the teachers of this province and to protect the parents, the third parties who have sustained grave problems as a result of the illegal action that was taken by the teachers of this province, and that is exactly what this bill intends to do.

Summaries have been given in the past by former speakers. The parliamentary assistant made those summaries, and I wish to repeat those.

The bill contains three parts. It will result in a payment of up to \$40 per day to parents or guardians of school-age children who were unable to attend a publicly funded school. I might add that although those application forms, when this bill is passed, will be made available to school boards, I believe they will also be made available, if members are interested in receiving those forms, in the various constituency offices. I will attempt to have those forms available in my office.

Second, it will provide protection from dismissal or discipline of employees who were unable to work because of child care responsibilities during the strike. As I have indicated, I have parents and guardians in that precise situation in my riding who I hope will take advantage of this section.

Third, it will offer protection from reprisals by teachers' unions against teachers who refused to participate in or support the province-wide strike.

Others before me have elaborated and others after me will be elaborating more on those specific issues. Again, to briefly summarize with respect to the payments to parents and guardians adversely affected by the teachers' strike, this payment would be available only to parents and guardians with school children 13 years of age or younger, children in child care facilities or day nurseries located in schools that were closed due to the teachers' action, or special-needs students in secondary schools. Parents or guardians would be able to apply for payments for any school day between October 27 and November 7 of this year that their children's school or school-based child care centre or nursery was closed, school bus transportation usually used by the children was not available, special education programs or services for their special needs children were not available, or in their opinion their children were unable to enter the school or

school-based child care centre or nursery school or were unlikely to be safely supervised there during the teachers' strike.

There is another speaker from our side who wishes to address this assembly. I congratulate the new Minister of Labour in bringing forward this legislation, because I think the people of this province cry out for assistance from this government, and we're going to do just that.

Mr David Caplan (Oriole): I appreciate the opportunity to join in the debate on Bill 161. It's very interesting having heard the debate from government members, from opposition members, who talk about what this piece of legislation is actually about. It really has two parts to it. The first is the \$40 bribe to parents. The second part, however, indicates the ongoing mean-spiritedness of the current government. I'll get into both of those during the course of my remarks.

In fact, I have attended a great number of public meetings held by parents within Oriole, and they have certainly expressed concerns about the government's package of education reforms, particularly in regard to Bill 160 and also in regard to the proposed funding formulae which are supposed to be coming from this government and have been promised many, many times.

As I indicated in my initial remarks, Bill 161 amounts to a bribe to parents. It was a slick promise, part of a public relations exercise. When the government should have been negotiating and working with teachers, with parents, with students in the province to bring in meaningful reform, workable reform, something to benefit students, it decided to take an abrasive, confrontational stance and forced a political protest from 126,000 teachers in this province, unprecedented in the history of this country and something I hope is never repeated. I hope we will return to some semblance of common sense, decency and working together with our educational partners, because it has not happened with this particular government, with Mr Harris and Mr Johnson at the forefront provoking teachers, provoking parents, provoking students.

The message from parents in Oriole is quite clear. They will not be bribed with this money, with \$400, because that \$400 is not going to make them forget the impact of Bill 160, in fact the impact of what went before it: \$533 million reduced from education, social contract savings made permanent.

Parents have said they agree that this is a bribe and they will not be fooled into supporting Mike Harris and his agenda for cutting classroom education. At every meeting I've attended, when parents were told the scope and magnitude of what the government has proposed and what has gone before, they've told me that what they intend to do is take any money that comes to them and give it back to their local schools, a suggestion this government would do well to listen to. Their own experts at the Education Improvement Commission recommended that any savings found through education be reinvested back into classrooms, be reinvested back towards supporting the children of Ontario.

There has been a noticeable decline in classroom education in Mike Harris's Ontario. We've had junior kindergarten eliminated from Ontario. It was made non-mandatory and then the government said, "Go and cut all the non-mandatory programs" — 26 boards of education, just a precursor of what's going to happen across this province directly as a result of what this government has done. That has had a significant impact on classrooms in this province.

Parents have been concerned about many of the unanswered questions in Bill 161. They want to know if the rebate is taxable. The government hasn't been able to answer those questions. They're tired of "trust me" arguments. No more of this "Write us a blank cheque." Write it down and spell it out. They want to know if the funds will be treated as income and will result in reduced payments to parents on workers' compensation, employment insurance, welfare. The government has refused to answer these questions. Jim Flaherty is saying, "Trust me."

Finally, many parents have been concerned about so-called double-dipping, since they don't have to submit receipts. The previous speaker was citing the requisite passage but nowhere in this legislation — in fact, Mr Flaherty specifically said receipts are not required. I suggest to the government members that they speak with their cabinet and their front bench and review Hansards which have indicated that that is certainly not a requirement of Bill 161. The double-dipping could potentially occur under this government, which claims to be a good manager of money. This certainly doesn't seem like running government like a business, as was quoted in some document that I know a number of members on the opposite side support and have those feelings about.

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There will be impacts on boards of education because the boards must pay regardless of whether there are enough savings, enough dollars in the pot, in those reserves, to cover the demand. Today we heard from the Minister of Education, who said he was maybe going to provide some assistance to boards, but a clear, unequivocal statement is what boards need. If the provincial government does not supply any overage that could potentially occur, those dollars come right out of classrooms, right out of operating funds.

How far will this government go in trying to bribe parents with their own dollars? We're not going to sacrifice our children for that.

As I alluded to earlier, you can't assess Bill 161 out of the context of the total package. Some \$32 million was identified as the saving from the two-week work stoppage during the political protest. Why isn't this money being invested in classrooms? The Minister of Education, the Premier and the members of the government all profess to want to put money back into classrooms. Well, if that is an attributable saving, why not put it back? Where is the compensation for the end of junior kindergarten? What about adult day programs? Where is the compensation for that? Where is the compensation for special education programs, which have been reduced or eliminated across

this province? Why doesn't the government put a pricetag on that? Deafening silence — unbelievable.

The other part of this is the mean-spiritedness. Before I begin, I just want to say that if this bill were solely about compensation, I would have no problem supporting it, but it's not. It is that mean-spirited, abrasive attack attitude this government has. It is absolutely insulting that the government would write into law that there will be no reprisals, when they go and spend \$3.5 million — taxpayer dollars, my dollars, your dollars — on election-style attack ads against their opponents; when they collect dossiers of information on people who come and present at public hearings. This government has absolutely no moral authority in telling anybody about repercussions, about reprisals and about any kind of human dynamic in relation to fair play.

This government showed it wanted to retaliate against vice-principals and principals by adding an amendment to Bill 160 which would take them out of the bargaining units and strip them of all fundamental protections.

This mean-spiritedness, this abrasiveness, this actual hypocrisy is why the two opposition parties voted against the bill on first reading and why I will be voting against this bill on final and third reading.

Mr Lessard: I rise to speak on third reading debate with respect to Bill 161 as a parent of a son named Brett. He'll be five years old in a couple of weeks, and he attends senior kindergarten at King Edward school in Walkerville in the city of Windsor. As a result of the teachers' political protest, my wife and I found it necessary to make alternative child care arrangements and did experience some inconvenience as a result of that political protest.

I know as a parent, and my wife knows, that there are many in our community who experienced some inconvenience. Although my wife and I don't find it absolutely necessary to claim \$40 a day for the two weeks the teachers were off, I know there are many persons in Windsor-Walkerville and Windsor-Riverside who would really appreciate being compensated \$40 a day and will be quite surprised to know that their member of provincial Parliament, in fact my wife and my member of provincial Parliament, voted against providing \$40 a day in compensation for parents who had to make alternative child care arrangements as a result of the teachers' political protest.

Having said that, I can't support this bill either, but for different reasons. This bill is called, "An Act to provide fairness for parents and employees by providing \$40 a day" — and I paraphrase, of course. But it really should be entitled, "An Act by a desperate government to buy support from the public in its dying days." That's what the title really should be.

It is just a blatant and cynical attempt to try and buy votes and use the teachers' political protest as an excuse to do it. We need to really just look back at the reasons why the government felt compelled to introduce Bill 161 in the first place. What would motivate a government to embark on a giant money giveaway, a giveaway that was so irresponsible that it didn't even require any receipts for

the public to make a claim to get the money? Who wouldn't mind getting \$40 a day, \$400 just sort of thrown into their laps? Not many of us would refuse if that opportunity came along. But the reason the government felt compelled to embark on this giant money giveaway was to try and shorten the teachers' political protest. It didn't work.

This was just an example of the government's total mismanagement of the issue of the teachers' political protest right from the get-go. Mike Harris's TV address during the protest really hardened the resolve of teachers. It was a direct attack on teachers. Their resolve was hardened as well when Howard Hampton and Bud Wildman in the NDP revealed that the real purpose behind Bill 160 was to withdraw \$667 million from the education system. Parents began to ask themselves, "How can a government improve the quality of education and withdraw almost a billion dollars from the system?" The answer is that it just can't be done. People began to realize that. This \$400, \$40 a day, is really an apology by a government that has been mismanaging the issue of dealing with education quality and with the teachers right from the beginning.

Having said that, who wouldn't want to get \$400 from the government? But we have some questions in our caucus. Is this going to be considered income? How is it going to be treated for those who are on social assistance, for example? We wished to bring in some amendments to this legislation to get those questions resolved, but because this government brought in a time allocation motion yesterday to shut down debate on this bill in an unprecedented fashion, we're not going to be able to introduce any amendments to this legislation. It's another example of a government that's moving too far, too fast, in the wrong direction. It's moving ahead with its legislative agenda in a fashion that doesn't permit us to reflect upon these bills, to introduce any amendments. It's a case of really introducing legislation without knowing what the impact is going to be.

Mr Dave Boushy (Sarnia): I want to speak on Bill 161. Listening to the opposition, they make that bill look very complicated. But it's very simple legislation. I think the people in my riding think it's very simple and very well understood. My paper, the Observer, in my home town took a survey on the street and this is what some people are saying:

"I have to claim it because I had to pay a babysitter out of my own pocket while I went to Lambton College," said Shanna MacDonald, a parent of three students at Devine Street public school. MacDonald added though that she didn't think she would get the money.

"I am going to put in a claim because it cost me double in babysitting for a week," said Pattie Blondin, a parent of one Devine Street student. Blondin regularly pays a babysitter to take of her young child.

"Jennifer Thornton, a parent with one child" —

Mrs McLeod: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I don't believe there is a quorum.

The Acting Speaker: Would you please check if we have a quorum.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

The Acting Speaker: A quorum is now present. The member for Sarnia.

Mr Boushy: "Jennifer Thornton, a parent of one child who attends Devine Street said she won't be looking to collect any money. 'I was at home with her all day and didn't have to pay out at all for child care,' she said.

"Another person, Steve Dinell, a parent of three children at St Margaret's separate school, also said he wouldn't be trying to get child care compensation. 'It's tempting, but it wouldn't be fair since my wife was at home during the strike,' he said."

I am very pleased to continue debate on Bill 161, a bill that would help parents, employees and the brave educators who dared to cross the picket lines during the illegal teachers' strike. I am even more pleased that this bill will soon be law.

I read the article in the Sarnia Observer wherein a parent expressed her doubts that she'll ever see the money that our government promised. This bill will prove again that this government stands by what it says and that we are prepared to do what is right.

Yes, it would have been easy for us to ignore the inconvenience to parents who felt the effects of the strike. I am not aware of any precedent for compensating families for the expenses incurred because of an illegal walkout. However, this is the right thing, the fair action and the fair thing to do.

Families were negatively affected by the illegal closure of schools. Parents had every right to expect that their children would be going to class. Instead, they found themselves scrambling to find arrangements for the care of their kids. Schedules had to be rearranged, and in some instances time needed to be taken off work.

Bill 161 will guarantee that no employee will suffer workplace repercussions for having missed work or being late as a result of having to look after their children. I am happy to report that I have not heard of a single instance in my riding or anywhere else where an employer acted unfairly in this regard. However, I believe this legislation will bring additional comfort to any employee who may be worried.

As for prohibiting unions from taking action against teachers who crossed the lines or tried to convince other teachers to go back to work, this is absolutely essential.

The Acting Speaker: Order. It is now 5:45, and pursuant to the order of the House of December 2, I am now required to put the question.

Mr Flaherty has moved third reading of Bill 161. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Resolved that the bill be now passed and be entitled as in the motion.

It being close to 6 of the clock, the House is adjourned until 6:30 of the clock.

The House adjourned at 1745.

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No. 255B

N° 255B

ISSN 1180-2987

**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

First Session, 36th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Première session, 36^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Wednesday 3 December 1997

Mercredi 3 décembre 1997

Speaker
Honourable Chris Stockwell

Président
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 3 December 1997

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 3 décembre 1997

The House met at 1830.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Northern Development and Mines): Mr Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to call the 89th order, second reading of Bill 167, An Act to change the name of the geographic township of Creighton in the Territorial District of Sudbury to Creighton-Davies, and to make a consequential amendment to the Territorial Division Act, which stands in the name of Mr Laughren.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Unanimous consent to move to the 89th order? It is agreed.

GEOGRAPHIC TOWNSHIP OF CREIGHTON-DAVIES ACT, 1997

LOI DE 1997 SUR LE CANTON GÉOGRAPHIQUE DE CREIGHTON-DAVIES

Mr Laughren moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 167, An Act to change the name of the geographic township of Creighton in the Territorial District of Sudbury to Creighton-Davies, and to make a consequential amendment to the Territorial Division Act / Projet de loi 167, Loi visant à remplacer le nom du canton géographique de Creighton dans le district territorial de Sudbury par celui de Creighton-Davies, et apportant une modification corrélative à la Loi sur la division territoriale.

Mr Floyd Laughren (Nickel Belt): I should say right off the top that I appreciate very much the cooperation of the government members and the government House leader in bringing forward this bill for debate this evening, and the cooperation and generosity of the member for Sudbury and the participation of my colleague from Sudbury East.

This changes the name of the existing township of Creighton to Creighton-Davies. As some members will know, Creighton used to be a town. It is now only a township because the town doesn't exist any more, but we're renaming it Creighton-Davies in honour of the retiring chairman of the regional municipality of Sudbury, Mr Tom Davies, who was born in Creighton and raised in Creighton and didn't leave there, as a matter of fact, until it was time for him to raise his own family.

Mr Davies is retiring after many years as regional chairman. He is held in very high regard by the entire community of the regional municipality. He served as mayor of the town of Walden and then as chairman of the regional municipality of Sudbury. He was a good chairman and he was a good mayor, he was a good family man and he was a good friend. I first met Tom when he was a school bus driver for my children. That's how I first got to know him, and he was very good. He was not an ordinary school bus driver; he would stop the bus if he saw a partridge or a pheasant at the side of the road and point it out to the children and tell them about it. He was an unusual man in that he took a great interest in the people around him.

There was a Tom Davies tribute in the local Walden arena about three weeks ago to which several thousand people came out to pay tribute to Tom. That Walden arena is now known as the Tom Davies Arena. As I say, several thousand people came out to pay tribute to a very fine man.

The town of Creighton doesn't exist any more; it is now simply a township. Creighton as a town was a company town, an Inco town. Inco removed that town from the face of the earth a number of years ago, but the township, of course, remained. There is a monument there that notes that fact.

It's most appropriate that we now in this Legislature are going to change the name of that township of Creighton to the Creighton-Davies township. As I said at the beginning, I appreciate very much the cooperation of everyone concerned and, as I said earlier, the government House leader and my two colleagues in the Sudbury area have been most generous in their support and in their willingness to share in this tribute to Tom Davies.

Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Northern Development and Mines): I rise today on behalf of the government to give our unqualified support to Bill 167, An Act to change the name of the geographic township of Creighton in the Territorial District of Sudbury to Creighton-Davies. It is with genuine appreciation for the initiative of my legislative colleague the member for Nickel Belt, and with heartfelt affection for a man upon whom this honour is bestowed, that I offer this support today.

By unanimously supporting this bill, this Legislature will give long-lasting and historical context to the words of praise and honour that have been echoing across the Sudbury region since regional chair Tom Davies announced his retirement earlier this fall.

There have been a number of tributes in Tom's honour over the last several weeks. The Sudbury community recently held a gala evening in his honour, and it is typical of Tom that he insisted that the wonderful celebration not focus on his achievements but on the achievements of the people he has served long and well.

Last month Tom was given an honorary degree by Laurentian University, and he chose to use that occasion to encourage his young audience to set goals and co-operate and collaborate. In Tom's words, "If a young baseball-playing kid from Creighton mine can show up in Rio de Janeiro to accept a United Nations award for Sudbury region's land reclamation work, you can go far too."

Last week Sudbury regional council unanimously voted to rename Civic Square as Tom Davies Square. At the meeting where this decision was made, Tom was presented with a sketch by local artist Oryst Sawchuk. The sketch is entitled *The Pathfinder*, and it perfectly illustrates the impact Tom has had during his 29 consecutive years in municipal government service. The sketch shows Tom standing tall, surrounded by the Creighton mine and the Sudbury Neutrino Observatory.

For three decades Tom Davies has dedicated himself with courage and integrity to leading the community he so passionately loves. He has taken it from an honourable past to a fearless future brimming with new opportunities.

Over the last few years, I have come to know Tom as a friend and as a trusted adviser on issues of importance to the Sudbury area and to the broader community of northern Ontario. A few weeks ago, I thanked him when I joined him in Sudbury for the planting of the three millionth tree in the Greening of Sudbury, a project that Tom himself began.

There are three million trees, and that is a tremendous testimonial to what one man can do. I know that Tom would want me to tell you he did not do it alone, and he would be right, because Tom's greatest talents are those of catalyst and consensus building. Whatever the project, from tree planting to a leading-edge search for the secrets of the universe at the Sudbury Neutrino Observatory, Tom Davies pulled together the partners that could make the dreams reality.

Just in case you think that only the big dreams matter to Tom, I want to tell you a story about him. In March 1995 a Ministry of Northern Development and Mines employee got a call from Tom Davies asking him to come over to his office. When he got there, Tom, who was all smiles, presented him with a variety of gifts and mementoes from the Sudbury region. Tom had heard that this employee's son, along with another local boy, was heading off to Finland to represent Canada at the World Winter Games for the Deaf. Tom wanted to make sure that they had lots of great Sudbury gifts to pass around as proud ambassadors for the Sudbury region.

The people of the township of Creighton know where Tom's mettle was forged — if you will allow me a little play on words. He was born, grew up and lived and worked in the tightly knit community of Creighton, a

community where neighbours, friends and strangers go out of their way to help one another without being asked.

I am proud to stand in my place today as Minister of Northern Development and Mines and ask all my colleagues in this Legislature to join me in recognizing the accomplishments of Thomas M. Davies. I ask you to support this bill so that, from now on and for always, the township of Creighton will be known as Creighton-Davies township.

1840

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): I'm proud to stand and say a few words about Tom this evening.

On behalf of the Davies family and the region of Sudbury, I would like to thank Floyd for working so closely with Jim Rule and Gerry Loughheed Jr and myself to ensure that this private member's bill came to fruition. The family and the region would like to thank ministers Leach and Sterling for their cooperation and their expeditious efforts in this regard.

Tom Davies is a Creighton boy who grew up on the streets of Creighton to lead the region. He is a ball player, a scholar, an accomplished politician, but mostly he was a gentleman and a man who dedicated himself to the community and to his family. He was a man whom all of us were proud to call a friend.

Certainly Tom Davies will not only be missed by the people in the region of Sudbury, but he'll be missed by all politicians at all levels of government for Tom was indeed a person who wanted always to build bridges, a person who was intent on ensuring that the survival of the Sudbury region came not through confrontation but through consensus, came from the efforts of many coming together, pooling their many, many talents, their many extraordinary efforts to one cause to ensure that the Sudbury region was a very, very viable community, one — and he devoted himself to this — ensuring that the youth of the Sudbury region could come home to jobs, to remain in the community so that the region would always be strong.

I spent 12 years on municipal council with Tom and he ensured that every one of his colleagues dedicated themselves to that task, to ensuring that they would work with whomever they had to. The youth of the region of Sudbury was his cause, the survival and growth of the region was his mission, so Tom did not at any time show partisan political favouritism. He said, "In order for us to ensure that Sudbury remains viable and grows as a region, we must make sure that we build bridges, not barriers," and Tom dedicated his many years to that cause.

When anyone thinks of Tom Davies, they think of children. Tom's favourite poem was entitled *A Heart for Children*, and I want to read it to the House and to the people who are watching because it best exemplifies what Tom Davies is all about:

One hundred years from now

It will not matter what kind of house I lived in,
How much I had in my bank,

Nor what my clothes looked like.

One hundred years from now

It will not matter what kind of school I attended,

What kind of typewriter I used,

How large or small my church,

But the world may be

a little better because

I was important in the

life of a child.

That's exactly the way Tom handled himself at all times. He devoted himself to nurturing a baby region and bringing it to fruition and to adulthood in a very, very healthy manner. He continued to do that in his efforts at ensuring that the youth of our community had jobs.

Tom has waged his battle with terminal cancer as he has faced all the challenges he faced as a regional chairman, with a positive outlook, a focused purpose, a ray of hope and, most important, a sense of humour.

As my time winds down, I'm reminded of the saying that said, "Love is friendship that has caught fire." Tom, Sally, the people of the region have caught fire and we all love you very much. Thank you, Speaker.

Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East): I am pleased to be here this evening to support the private member's Bill 167 that has been put forward by my colleague from Nickel Belt.

As he has mentioned in his opening remarks, the purpose of the act is to change the name of the geographic township of Creighton to Creighton-Davies and it has been moved as an act tonight to recognize the very significant, the very substantial contribution which has been made by Tom Davies to political life in his own community of Walden and to the regional municipality of Sudbury. His political contribution has been made over many years, both in the time that he served as the mayor of Walden and in the time that he served as chair for the regional municipality of Sudbury. There are others in this chamber tonight and at home on council who have served with Tom under both capacities and can attest to that long and very distinguished political career.

Tom had a unique ability to get regional council members representing some often very different and diverse points of view to work together. That is not to say that regional council under Tom's leadership did not have its share of very acrimonious and very heated debate on very important public policy issues, but it is also true to say that during the course of those debates and during the course of his time as regional chair Tom very skilfully managed, sometimes through subtle and sometimes through not-so-subtle means, to get people on board, working together to have a common interest and to have a united sense from all the players with respect to the issues that needed to be dealt with.

He could be as a politician very persuasive, very forceful, engaging, critical and complimentary, but I think it's safe to say that his colleagues on regional council continued both to recognize and to appreciate his leadership abilities and his very deep sense of commitment to improving the quality of life for people who live in our

community. That is why regional council members continued to endorse Tom as regional chair, continued to select him to be regional chair after each municipal election over a 15-year period.

Tom was also very instrumental in his capacity as regional chair in bringing together some very diverse interests and opinions and representatives from across the whole community to try and further the interests of the whole region. In the face of concrete evidence over a decade ago that our two major employers in the community, both Inco and Falconbridge, would provide declining not increasing levels of employment, he made a very conscious decision that he would work with members across the community to focus much time and much energy on trying to diversify the Sudbury region.

He was very much the driving force behind the work and behind the effort to bring in federal representatives, provincial representatives, labour, business and the academic community to lobby together to try and bring public sector jobs to our community. This did contribute greatly to the diversification of the Sudbury economy and did very much result in new jobs and new economic benefits for our community, and given that we are looking for unanimous consent on third reading tonight for this bill, I won't make partisan comments now about how this Conservative government has affected that strategy. But there is no doubt that there was a great deal of effort made over those years and Tom Davies was the driving force behind that effort to change the nature of our economy in the Sudbury region.

On a very personal level, it is true that I did not always agree with Tom Davies's point of view on different issues, and that was certainly very true in the times that we were in government. We did clash on several occasions quite vehemently with respect to issues that we were concerned about with respect to our same community. However, I suspect on those occasions that he clashed just as vehemently with my own opinions. That is the nature of politics and the nature of the whole game.

I did appreciate and acknowledge and continue to do so today Tom's very long-standing commitment to improving the quality of life in our community. His concern was always to do that. It was always paramount and it very much motivated all of his political action and all of his political lobbying.

It is fitting tonight that this assembly would honour Tom Davies by renaming the township of Creighton the township of Creighton-Davies because it will serve as a lasting tribute to a fine politician, to a fine father and to a good friend.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Is there any further debate on second reading? Is it the pleasure of the House the motion carry? It is carried.

Mr Laughren: I seek unanimous consent to move third reading of Bill 167.

The Acting Speaker: Is it agreed? Agreed.

Mr Laughren moved third reading of the following bill:
Bill 167, An Act to Change the name of the geographic township of Creighton in the Territorial District of Sud-

bury to Creighton-Davies, and to make a consequential amendment to the Territorial Division Act / Projet de loi 167, Loi visant à remplacer le nom du canton géographique de Creighton dans le district territorial de Sudbury par celui de Creighton-Davies, et apportant une modification corrélatrice à la Loi sur la division territoriale.

The Acting Speaker: Do you have a statement?

Mr Laughren: No, other than to once again thank all my colleagues in the assembly for allowing this to proceed this evening.

The Acting Speaker: Is there further debate?

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? It is carried.

Resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

1850

FINANCIAL SERVICES COMMISSION OF ONTARIO ACT, 1997

LOI DE 1997 SUR LA COMMISSION DES SERVICES FINANCIERS DE L'ONTARIO

Mr Baird, on behalf of Mr Eves, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 140, An Act to establish the Financial Services Commission of Ontario and to make complementary amendments to other statutes / Projet de loi 140, Loi créant la Commission des services financiers de l'Ontario et apportant des modifications complémentaires à d'autres lois.

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean): At the outset of my remarks, I just want to know if all parties would like to split the time equally between the three parties. I'm asking unanimous consent.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Is there unanimous consent that the three parties split the time equally? It is agreed.

Mr Baird: C'est toujours un privilège d'avoir l'opportunité de participer dans le débat d'un projet de loi qui est assez important, comme le projet de loi 140.

I'd like to indicate at the outset of my remarks that I would like to share my time with the honourable member for Muskoka-Georgian Bay, my predecessor as parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance, who, I might add, very capably led the debate on this legislation for the government at both second reading and in the standing committee on finance and economic affairs, I believe.

This bill, Bill 140, will merge the Ontario Insurance Commission, the Pension Commission of Ontario and the deposit institutions division of the Ministry of Finance into one agency: the Financial Services Commission of Ontario. The merger will result in a more efficient and better coordinated financial services regulatory system while providing the public with greater protection. The public, the people of Ontario, depend on that protection. Whether it's a retired individual living in Kitchener-

Waterloo or a young girl named Aynsley living in Niagara Falls, people depend on that important protection afforded by the regulations in this legislation.

The financial services sector that will be governed by the new commission includes pension, insurance, loan and trust companies, credit unions, les caisses populaires dans la province, cooperatives and mortgage brokers. Merging regulators for these sectors will make the most effective use of public resources, especially given the industry trends occurring in the financial services sector.

In recent years there has been a steady trend towards business integration in the sector, with cross-ownerships and networking of financial services and programs. The new commission's integrated structure will allow regulators to see the whole picture and know what diversified participants in the industry are doing.

The Financial Services Commission of Ontario will strengthen the protection of consumers, depositors and pension plan members. One cannot state how important these types of initiatives are. Whether it's those young children of parents being able to depend on an effective insurance corporation or a pensioner wanting to ensure the integrity of our pension system in Ontario, it's an extremely important responsibility, and this bill will help the government of Ontario exercise that responsibility effectively, wisely and well.

Mr Bill Grimmer (Muskoka-Georgian Bay): It's certainly a pleasure and an honour for me to follow up on the comments of the member for Nepean, who seems to be fitting very well into the —

Interjection: Big shoes.

Mr Grimmer: — big shoes that I left behind in the Ministry of Finance.

I wanted to speak about the extensive consultation that was conducted by the Ministry of Finance people before Bill 140 was presented. In speaking to the bill on second reading and also during the public hearings on the bill, the number of consultations that had occurred was quite obvious. There were only a few groups that had asked for public hearings, and we certainly accommodated those people, but the number of groups and stakeholders in the financial community who seemed satisfied with the main thrust of Bill 140 I think is a testament to the amount of extensive consultation that took place between ministry personnel and people from the various sectors in the financial community.

It's also worthwhile noting that the type of integration that's occurring in Bill 140, in the financial sector, and the kind of economies that are being found by moving these three sectors together into one agency have already been done in three other jurisdictions in Canada.

It began as early as 1983 in Quebec, where the deposit-taking institutions, the market intermediaries and the regulators of insurance were brought together into one Inspector General of Financial Institutions. So Quebec really led the way in this integration of regulation in the financial sector.

This was followed in 1987 by the federal government as they set up the Superintendent of Financial Institutions,

which merged the regulation and supervision of a number of financial sectors, including banks; pension plans; insurance; loan, trust and investment companies; and also federally registered cooperative credit associations.

In 1989, British Columbia established the Financial Services Commission to regulate credit unions, trust companies, insurance, real estate and mortgage brokers.

In all those jurisdictions there seems to be an acceptance generally that the new approach is in keeping with the integration of financial services that's occurring in the marketplace as well, where we see insurance, lending institutions and pension providers moving together, often in one corporate entity, to be more competitive in the marketplace.

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The main savings that will accrue from Bill 140 and the integration of the three entities into one agency have been estimated at about \$3.8 million yearly. Most of the savings are going to be in what's referred to as back-office functions, such as administrative and support services, which to some extent are duplicated in each of the organizations. There continue to be discussions within the ministry on the most effective way to find those savings while at the same time maintaining the protection of the public, which is really the number one goal when it comes to financial sector regulation.

The scheme of Bill 140 in establishing the new commission is that it will have an independent appeal body, the Financial Services Tribunal, to provide expert, prompt and effective review of those regulatory decisions that this commission will have to make from day to day.

The act has been carefully drafted to make sure that when appointments are made to the commission, the expertise that's currently in the three separate financial sector regulatory entities will be preserved. In allowing for the flexible approach of having nine to 15 members, we can preserve the expertise around pension decision-making and still allow for other appointments to be made to the commission to take into account the other main areas in the financial field. Possibly those people could start to acquire expertise in each area so that they would be flexible and could sit on different panels to hear different issues from the financial sectors. The kind of staff expertise that currently exists within the ministry for financial institutions and within the pension commission on pension matters and also with regard to insurance matters will be preserved within the newly formed commission. I foresee the possibility of, at one time, having all of them located in one geographic area. That will lead to further savings and further efficiencies in operating the general regulation of the financial sector.

Bill 140 provides a framework under which the commission's expenditures, and those of the Ministry of Finance supporting the regulatory regime, would be analysed and allocated to each of the regulated sectors. This is something that to some extent is already taking place in some of the sectors; in other sectors, they're not currently paying for their own regulation.

When we had the public hearings and heard from the credit unions and the co-ops, my impression was that there

was a willingness to participate in that kind of structure provided they had an opportunity to be part of the preparation of rules and regulations around fees and levies that would go out to make sure that it was a cost-recovery program. We assured the people who appeared at the hearing that they would have the opportunity to continue to work with finance ministry people to make sure they were part of the process of developing those rules and the type of fee structure that would make sure we had a self-supporting regulatory scheme.

In wrapping up my comments, I would like to say that I think the creation of the Financial Services Commission through Bill 140 will be seen as a step towards smaller, more efficient and cost-effective government in keeping with our government's approach in other areas. It should lead to better regulation of Ontario's financial services while having continued consumer protection and an enhanced contribution by Ontario's financial sector to the province's prosperity.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): I appreciate the chance to comment on Bill 140 and to say that our party has been supportive of this bill. As previous speakers have indicated, it's a bill that pulls together three separate organizations dealing with deposits, dealing with insurance and dealing with pensions. It's a bill that is designed to improve efficiency and to save costs.

Having said that we are supportive of it, I will point out some challenges, because I think the new board should be aware of concerns that at least our party has as it embarks on its quite important task.

The first concern, which was expressed at committee, is that this board will play a role in perhaps some of the most sensitive things for Ontarians. I don't think anybody is as sensitive about an issue as pensions, and the protection of one's retirement savings is crucial. That area will be under increased scrutiny in the years ahead. I think most organizations are now moving to different pension plans. We've gone through a period where the equity markets have done exceptionally well. It's difficult to see that kind of growth sustain itself, so many pension funds right now look very good, but I think pension managers would acknowledge that the growth they have seen in the assets in their portfolio is unsustainable.

That, coupled with insurance, coupled with the deposits — those, as I say, are three of the most sensitive things. As you will recall, Mr Speaker — Mr Conway would know better than I. I think it was Greymark, was it, Mr Conway?

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew North): Greymac.

Mr Phillips: The collapse of a trust company perhaps 12 years ago was the cause of some considerable concern here in Ontario. We've been lucky, fortunate, and I guess partially through good management, that we haven't seen a similar instance, but I just say to all of us that we are relying on this organization to be a watchdog on those things.

Interjection: Confederation Life.

Mr Phillips: My colleague mentions Confederation Life. Luckily, it shook the industry but the industry was able to recover.

The point I'm making is that we are now putting those three related but none the less separate organizations together. It is at least a concern that as they staff those organizations, we not lose the expertise in each of those three rather distinct areas.

The second concern we have on the bill is for our co-op sector. They historically have not been paying the same fees as some of the other organizations that will come under this umbrella. While they certainly were not arguing that they should not be paying their fair share, they at least are concerned about how their fair share will be determined.

As a side issue, I think through almost an accident, the entire co-op movement has now moved under the umbrella of this organization. This is called An Act to establish the Financial Services Commission. Its expertise is finance. Its expertise is in being a watchdog over pensions, deposits and insurance, but all the co-op movement now falls under this. It is in my opinion an accident. They are orphans there, and in my opinion it's a mistake.

The reason for it is that the financial institutions in the co-op sector have to be brought in here, so the entire co-op sector is. For example, the co-op food organizations, co-op child care organizations, all now fall under this umbrella. I dare say my own hope would be that the organization, as it begins to function, will give us some recommendations on whether that's appropriate or not. My instincts are that it's not appropriate.

The reason I stress the pension issue — and it's rather timely, because if one is not careful, we can in the province get into some considerable difficulties in the pension area. I use the teacher pension as an example.

Interjection.

Mr Phillips: The member for Nepean said something there, but it's timely because here's what's happened on the teachers' pension. In 1975, just around an election, the then-Conservative government said to the teachers, "We're going to give you a fully indexed pension," and it was successful. As a matter of fact, I ran in the 1975 election and was defeated by the Conservative candidate, a fine candidate, I might say: Mr Wells, Minister of Education I think at the time.

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But the point was that the government of the day decided to give a fully indexed pension, not to be funded by the teachers but to be funded by the taxpayers, added on to the benefits of the pension plan. The problem was that the teachers were given that fully indexed pension plan. It wasn't something they demanded; it was a campaign promise that the government of the day decided was a good idea. For 15 years, from 1975 to 1990, there was never a penny put in to fund that. The auditors obviously, as we all know, began to look at that and said: "This is an unfunded liability. It's as sure as anything you want a debt that the province of Ontario owes." But the way, the province of Ontario owes 100% of that debt, the unfunded liability for the indexed pension.

The reason I'm somewhat familiar with it is that from 1985 to 1990, the Liberals were the government of the day and were under a lot of pressure to begin to fund that operation, the pensions, and rightly so, because it was a liability that had to be funded. By the way, it was growing into literally billions of dollars.

In 1990, a plan was put into place to fund that unfunded liability and the payments began to be made in 1990. Then, in December 1993, the NDP government of the day had an actuarial study done on the pension fund and found that the unfunded liability wasn't quite as large as was thought. The investments had been growing not badly. They did something in conjunction with the teachers that I think was a mistake. As a matter of fact, at the time — this was December 13, 1993 — I said to the public, "This is a mistake." What the NDP government and the teachers decided to do was take a three-and-a-half-year holiday from making any payments against that. To me, that was a mistake. I said at the time that the government was saying, "Let's take a 42-month holiday from any principal interest payments so we can get the pension fund into as bad a situation as we thought we had before."

Bear in mind, we're talking hundreds of millions of dollars here. For three and half years there were no payments made against that unfunded liability. In 1992-93, the payments were supposed to be \$328 million; they were \$188 million. They were supposed to be \$293 million, they were zero; \$396 million, zero; \$405 million, zero. Then, of course, the new government was faced with the challenge of restarting those payments because they were due to begin again actually on August 1, 1996, at the rate of \$35,000 a month.

The unfunded liability still is there. It dates back to 1975 and it is 100% the responsibility of the taxpayers of Ontario. Whether that was fair or not fair is not for us to judge because the government of the day made that decision. But I would say this: In 1993, in my opinion, the government of the day made a mistake taking a three-and-a-half-year holiday. Now the new government is required by law to pick up that payment. By the way, in 1997-98 it will be \$465 million.

The reason I raise this is because the new commission will have to monitor this. It will have to monitor it carefully because when the government of the day passed a bill to give itself this holiday, it bypassed the pension commission. The reason I go through all of this is because, as you may recall, during the debate on Bill 160 Premier Harris and Mr Johnson said, "We're actually spending more money on education in 1997 than we did in 1996 or 1995."

That is true exclusively because the government, by law, was required to restart the payments against the unfunded liability and the pension. So the pension payments went from \$685 million in 1995 to \$927 million in 1996 — if you remember, I talked about payments cranking up in 1996 — to \$1.145 billion in 1997. That's directly as a result of the government of the day taking a three-and-a-half-year holiday from making payments against the unfunded liability.

I also want to point this out because the educational community is saying, "Listen, in real terms, money for classrooms, we've been seeing a decrease," and that is true. Every year since 1994 the amount of money actually spent on operating has dropped. In spite of the fact that we now have 86,000 more students, we're spending dramatically less money in 1997 on operating than we did in 1994.

It is important for these reasons: one, this commission now will have responsibility for monitoring these things. It's important for a second reason. I have a suspicion that the government of the day once again is looking at ways to cut off the payments against that unfunded liability. We've heard some hints about that. When there was the debate on Bill 160, the government was indicating, "Maybe we don't need to make the payments against the unfunded liability," but you can see the trap we get into when governments play games with pension payments.

At the time that the NDP took that three-and-a-half-year holiday, I said, "Listen, in reality you may have a justification for reducing the payments by 15% to 85% of what they should have been, but not to zero." It is essentially deciding you're not going to make any payments against your mortgage for three and a half years. It built way back up. If you read the Ontario teachers' pension plan annual report, they report this as an asset. They say, "It's guaranteed by the province; the province will pay it; it's an asset for us."

I hope this new commission monitors these pension things carefully because I can see coming — I don't know if the Conservative back bench wants this too — the possibility of some more games paid with pensions, teachers' pensions and perhaps OMERS pension, particularly because there has been a huge run-up on the assets of the pension plans because of the quite extraordinary growth in the equity markets, and most of them are heavily invested in equities.

The reason the province of Ontario, on behalf of the taxpayers, finally started making payments was because the financial community recognized that if we leave these unfunded liabilities growing, we're making a substantial mistake.

I hate to be one of those ones who say, "I told you that this would happen," but I have the documents here from December 13, 1993, and the headline was, "NDP Holiday is No Break for the Taxpayers." "The Rae government plans to hide the real deficit by adding \$2.3 billion in new debt during a three-and-a-half-year holiday from scheduled payments." That's one of the tasks for the new organization.

Mr Gilles Pouliot (Lake Nipigon): Let's talk about the balanced budget when you were the government.

Mr Phillips: I don't mind you speaking last because I'd like to know about the teachers' pension here.

The other one that I want to talk about is the Provincial Auditor's report. The reason I want to talk about that is because one of the purposes of this document is to downsize the organization that monitors these three key areas: the insurance, the pensions and the deposit

insurance. We have in the auditor's report the first evidence of the possible problems when you begin to cut the resources to monitor things. The 1997 auditor's report is for the period from April 1, 1996, to March 31, 1997, the first full year of the new government, which came into power midway through the previous fiscal year.

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The auditor points out to the taxpayers some of the problems that we've run into with downsizing, with cutting the staff in the public sector. There's broad-scale support, I might say, for efficiencies, for finding ways that we do things better with fewer resources and all those things. But sometimes we are penny wise and pound foolish.

A couple of significant concerns were pointed out in the auditor's report. One is that when the cutbacks occur in our criminal justice system, the court backlog begins to grow. The reason I point this out is that this bill will mean substantially fewer resources allocated against these areas. I do not have a problem with that as long as there's an assurance that we have enough resources to ensure that the consumer is protected in insurance and in deposits and in pensions. But in the area of the court backlogs, where we've had cutbacks in the levels of service, the growth in the number of criminal charges pending in Provincial Division have gone from, in 1994, 44,000 to 70,000, a dramatic increase. That's as a result of fewer resources.

It goes on later in that same document to say, "In March 1997 program staff informed us that Management Board had approved the selection of three private collection agencies and that it had begun to transfer" fines over to them. "According to staff, the transfer of fines that became overdue after March 1996 would begin once Management Board Secretariat had completed its selection...."

"On average approximately \$4 million in fines go into default each month.... We noted that over 75% of the overdue fines are more than one year old."

What they point out here is that as a result of the cutbacks in staff, fines are not being collected, student loans are in some considerable default and, consequently, the savings from fewer staff have been far more eaten up in the loss of revenue from fines. So the Provincial Auditor points out the dangers of cutbacks in services without adequate management of them.

The bill, which is designed to streamline activity, has those dangers. As we transfer these sensitive services — I went through the issue on pensions that I suspect in the next few days we'll be looking at, if not in the budget coming up in April. We need a strong commission to monitor that, coupled with a commission that can ensure that our deposits and our insurance are well managed. As I said at the outset of my remarks, I don't think there's anything that will shake the confidence of Ontario as much as if several pension plans somehow or other go off the rails or if any of our deposit institutions — we're not talking about the banks here, by the way — go off the rails or if our insurance industry in any way isn't functioning well. By the way, I will say we're blessed in

Ontario. We've got a very strong world-class insurance organization, our financial institutions are second to none and we've had relatively few problems in the pension area.

But this is a significant change and I hope, as this new organization begins its work, that the staff is selected well and the resources are selected well and, if anything, that for a period of time, if we err, we err on the side of having slightly more resources rather than slightly less resources until the organization is functioning smoothly.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): It's always a pleasure to listen to the member for Scarborough-Agincourt explain to the people of Ontario so precisely what exactly happened with respect to the pension funding situation as far as the teachers' pension funds are concerned. I know that the government line, as you well know, Mr Speaker, over the last number of weeks as we've been discussing Bill 160 has been that no, actually, they're putting more money into education or at least the same amount as they have over the last couple of years. The only thing that really is true about that is that the total amount of money that they've put in may be the same but it does include the substantial pension contribution in the last year of \$1.1 billion that wasn't there before for a number of years, ever since 1993. If you take that \$1.1 billion out of there, as not being classroom expenses, you can understand that in actual fact the amount of money that's being expended in education is much less from a practical viewpoint in the last couple of years than it was before.

As has already been indicated, we will be supporting this bill but at the same time we have some concerns. I suppose the major concern that I have deals with any bill that talks excessively about regulation and regulatory powers, whether they be held by a commissioner, as in this case, or whether held by a particular minister. I think we must all remember that regulations can be passed in a minister's office. They may have to go to cabinet or they may not, but basically it's not a public process. Regulatory government means that the people of Ontario will not only not have a say in the matter as to what the regulations ought to be, but may not even know that it's being passed or has been passed until it has actually happened.

When you look at the record of this current government over the last two and a half years, you can see the concern that some people have about the excessive amount of regulatory powers that ministers have retained for themselves. I suppose it all started about — what is it now? — two years ago when Bill 26 was introduced. I'm sure that at that time a lot of people said to themselves: "What's this all about, Bill 26? Why are people getting so excited about it? Why are we having these sit-ins in the Legislature?"

Of course the main aspect of Bill 26 dealt with the fact that ministers were given substantial regulatory powers of the kind and nature that they had never had before. We have seen it in the health restructuring area, where a

minister unilaterally took a whole bunch of powers on to himself and then gave them off to a health restructuring commission to do the work around the province, from which he or she can now take the position, "It's not I who am taking those actions of closing hospitals or recommending that hospitals be closed, it's the independent commission," when the ultimate decider is the minister in the long run. That's the accountable person who is elected here.

As a result of the kind of regulatory powers that were given to various ministers — not only in the health area, but also, for example, in the municipal affairs area. How many unilateral orders of amalgamations, restructurings have been taking place in Ontario over the last couple of years? Some the people of those particular areas have liked and the results may be good from a restructuring viewpoint, but in many, many cases they were forced down the throats of people who didn't want to be restructured and where so far at least there hasn't been any indication whether the restructuring actually has made any sense or not.

Government by regulation is a government that decides issues away from the Legislative Assembly, away from the general public, so that people will not have an opportunity to see what's actually being changed. That's the concern that we have about this bill as well and about any bill that talks excessively about regulations.

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The other concern that my friend has already pointed to deals with the issues of co-ops. I know there were a number of presentations made to the committee by the Canadian Co-operative Association, for example, in which they stated — and I'll just read from their brief, Mr Speaker, if you'll allow me a minute, that, "This aspect of the bill will have a significant impact on the cost of doing business for co-ops, and is the most serious issue for our system." This is from a brief presented to the standing committee on finance and economic affairs by the Canadian Co-operative Association, Ontario region. They say:

"The commission will have the power to levy an assessment on the sectors." This organization does "not believe that an assessment is the appropriate way to levy against co-ops.

"Unlike the financial services sector that is heavily regulated, co-ops have little and in some cases no ongoing relationship with the ministry. Most not-for-profit and small co-ops only deal with the ministry on incorporation and bylaw changes. Given the nature of our business relationship with the ministry, a sector-wide assessment is not justified. Other forms of businesses and not-for-profit organizations do not have that type of levy and it would be a competitive disadvantage to incorporate as a co-op."

They therefore recommend that Bill 140, subsection 25(1), be amended to exempt co-ops incorporated under the Co-operative Corporations Act from assessments.

This is a concern the concern that in effect co-ops will be charged fees that weren't there before, and obviously that's a charge ultimately against the members of the co-

op. They raise some very interesting statistics. In one of the briefs they say that for every \$40,000 that they may be charged in assessment, in effect it's going to mean one job within the co-op sector.

We're concerned about that. We're concerned that in effect co-ops that haven't been subjected to these kinds of fees — and they can be unilaterally set by the commission — may now be subjected to them, and obviously it's going to affect their total operation because the guiding principle of this new commission is that it be self-financed. For credit unions basically this means a substantial new user fee being imposed upon them without really any formula being set for the kind of assessment that may be given to them.

The other concern, and the member for Scarborough-Agincourt just dealt with it to some degree, deals with some of the comments that the Provincial Auditor made in his auditing report. I wonder if I could just refer to them again. This is a report that was tabled with the Legislative Assembly about a week or so ago in which the Provincial Auditor of Ontario, who's not a government official — he's an official who is responsible directly to the Legislative Assembly, to the 130 of us who are elected here. He basically looks at a certain number of ministries in any particular year and he reviews those ministries, whether or not we're getting value for the money that's being spent by those ministries. He takes four or five different ministries and he looks at what's happening in those.

For example, in the year 1997 he looked at the Ministry of the Attorney General, the Ministry of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation, the Ministry of Community and Social Services, some of the programs that are involved there, the Ontario student assistance program in the education and training area. In the Ministry of Environment and Energy he looked at the conservation and prevention division, and in the Ministry of Finance he looked at the employer health tax situation.

Those are the prime areas that the Provincial Auditor looked at this past year, and as has already been pointed out by the member for Scarborough-Agincourt, certainly in the courts administration program that is operated by the Ministry of the Attorney General, there are some very startling statistics. I know I've talked about this before in this House, but I think it bears repeating as to what can happen when adequate finances to ensure that the programs that are being run by the province of Ontario through one ministry or another are simply not available.

The Provincial Auditor talked about the total criminal charges that are pending in Provincial Division. My colleague just referred to that, that as of the end of 1996 there were 224,000 cases outstanding, which just so happens to be the same number of cases that were outstanding back in 1989-90 when as a result of the Askov decision — and we can blame past governments for that, both Liberal and NDP, whoever was involved in that. I don't shirk away from that responsibility. But there was the same number of cases outstanding, and as a result of the Askov decision that came out about that time, I believe about 50,000 cases were thrown out of court.

Nothing undermines the public's reliance upon our legal system and upon the legal protections that they have in this country more than the knowledge that 50,000 legitimately laid charges that still needed to be proved in court, and I'm not for a moment suggesting that all these 50,000 people were guilty, but they were legitimately laid by the individuals involved, police officers, crown attorneys etc, were thrown out because of delay. As we all know, justice delayed is justice denied. The fact is that 50,000 cases that people in our province worked on, that they felt were properly laid were thrown out because of delay.

The startling fact about that is the case that now we are right back again to the position that existed in 1989-90 where we've got the same number of outstanding criminal charges that haven't been heard yet, namely some 225,000. What's interesting is that 70,000 of these cases go back more than eight months and it's particularly in that area of cases that have been outstanding for eight months or more that there has been a significant increase over the last two years.

Back in 1994, for example, there were 43,000 cases that were more than eight months old and now it's over 70,000 — not quite double but almost double the amount that there were two years ago. Who knows what the result will be there? That is as a result of there just not being adequate resources made available in the department of the Attorney General to make sure that these cases are tried and are dealt with in an expeditious fashion.

Mr Pouliot: Bill 140 will fix that.

Mr Gerretsen: Bill 140 will fix that because it talks about regulations. We're talking about the regulatory power that this government has taken upon itself in so many, many different areas, whether we're talking about municipal restructuring, hospital restructuring.

How about Bill 160? Let's take a look at Bill 160. When you think about it, the regulatory power that the Minister of Education has taken upon himself to levy in effect a total of \$6 billion worth of taxes with the stroke of a pen, \$2.5 billion in the residential sector and \$3.5 billion in the commercial sector, he can do that with the stroke of a pen without any of us knowing about it. I know there's been a commitment given this year that for the year 1998 that's all the government wants to extract from the local property taxpayer for education. But who is to say that next year, when the government may be under certain financial pressures, all of a sudden by way of regulation the government will not decide to say, "Well, if we got \$6 billion last year, why don't we take \$7 billion this year or \$8 billion or why don't we change the apportionment between the amount that we take in the residential tax sector as opposed to the commercial tax sector?" That can all be done by regulations.

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Even the minister himself, Mr Speaker — and I know you're asking yourself, "What's this got to do with 140?" It's regulation. It's the regulatory power that we're talking about in 140 and the regulatory power that the minister now has under 160. Even the minister himself said: "It's

not preferable that I have this power, but I have to have it during this transition year. I have to have it, and maybe next year we'll put a new act in that somehow regulates it a little bit better than doing it purely by regulatory powers."

That simply isn't good enough because it leaves the people of Ontario, who are already distrustful of this government in so many, many different areas, very leery as to exactly what will happen next year when all of a sudden the government figures: "We're not going to raise income taxes, we're not going to raise user fees, we're not going to do any of that. Why don't we raise the property taxes — the education levy by way of property taxes — by another \$1 billion?" Guess what? Who's going to get blamed for that?

Mr Wayne Lessard (Windsor-Riverside): Nobody will notice that.

Mr Gerretsen: Nobody will notice that; that's right. When will you notice that? When you get your tax bill and you say: "My gosh, last year the taxes on my house were \$1,200 in total; this year they're \$1,600 in total. It's got to be that local council that did it to me." And then you find out that maybe about \$200 of that \$400 tax increase was as the result of the education levy that has been unilaterally imposed upon the property taxpayer by the Minister of Education.

Interjections.

Mr E.J. Douglas Rollins (Quinte): Talk about the bill, John.

Mr Gerretsen: I see the members across — as a matter of fact, I even felt something flying past me here. I know I'm not in a danger zone or anything like that. I know the members opposite don't want to listen to this kind of argument. They don't want to listen to it because they know it's the truth. It's your hope that your local councillor, those hardworking people, those people who are closest to the people, who truly know what's going on in their communities, will be blamed for the kind of tax increases that you have given the Minister of Education the ability to raise by simply a stroke of the pen or by regulation.

I don't want to take too much time, but there's so much still to say. Going back to the Provincial Auditor's report, I've got to mention these two things. There is another statistic here on page 38 of the report that I find absolutely amazing for a government that says to the people of Ontario: "We are going to run the business of government in Ontario in a businesslike fashion. We are the business party, the party of Bay Street." For the life of me, if you are —

Mr Douglas B. Ford (Etobicoke-Humber): Cancel the GST too.

Mr Gerretsen: Yes, and even you, sir. You are part of the business party here.

For the life of me, I cannot understand why, when there is \$139.9 million outstanding in Highway Traffic Act fines, of which \$82 million the ministry has knowledge of the driver's licence information of the people who owe this money. As a matter of fact, it states right here there

are 15,800 individuals who owe \$1,000 or more and there are 116 individuals who owe \$10,000 or more under the Highway Traffic Act. Those are horrendous statistics. That \$139 million comes out of your pocket, sir, and mine, and that of every taxpayer in Ontario. That is money that could be well spent in paying down the public debt, or in new programs for the people who are really suffering and vulnerable out there, or in reducing the deficit for this current year. Why aren't you doing it? You can do it.

Listen to the next paragraph that the Provincial Auditor states in his report. I really want you to pay close attention to this, Mr Speaker, and I appreciate the attention that you've paid so far. It says, "The payment notices from the ministry warn that, in addition to licence suspension, failure to pay fines can result in other measures, such as the ministry informing the credit bureau of the debt, requiring banks to deduct the money owing from the person's bank account or registering a lien against the person's real property." This is the most frightening sentence perhaps in the whole report.

He then goes on to say: "We noted that none of these measures" — garnisheeing their bank accounts, putting liens against their property — "had been initiated by the ministry. While we recognize these measures would not be practicable in every case, some could be effective depending on the nature of the cases and the amounts of the fines," especially of those individuals of whom you know their driver's licence numbers and everything and you can simply suspend their licence until they pay up.

I ask you, sir, the member for Etobicoke-Humber, why aren't you after the Attorney General and saying: "We are out this \$139 million. We know where you can get at least \$82 million from the people of Ontario who have been levied these fines after a due process in court etc. Why aren't you doing something about it?"

You run a business. Most of you have run businesses. You wouldn't put up with an \$82-million bad debt. You would try to collect it. Why are you not collecting it?

When I've brought this point up before, I usually got blank stares from the government members, and even some other members too, who will go unnamed at this point in time.

Mr Pouliot: You still do.

Mr Gerretsen: We get blank stares. They say, you know: "Why is this man so vindictive? Why should he insist that the people of Ontario who legitimately owe these fines actually pay it back to the taxpayer of Ontario?"

Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton North): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I believe we're debating Bill 140 and I'm not sure the comments of the member for Kingston and The Islands have anything to do with it. I'd like him to stick to the matter at hand.

The Acting Speaker: That is a point of order. I've been listening quite carefully to the member for Kingston and The Islands and I'm sure that there is something in there that will address Bill 140.

Mr Gerretsen: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker, for your excellent ruling once again. If the member had just

waited one sentence, I would have said to him, as I was about to say then, that just shows you the regulatory powers that can be abused by the wrong minister, just like they can in Bill 160 — in Bill 140. In Bill 140. You see, we sometimes make mistakes on the numbers, but we never make a mistake about what we're really talking about.

What we're really talking about is a government that likes to act like a bully in so many different ways, as they have for the last two and a half years. They liked to act as a bully by first of all taking on the most vulnerable in our province when they cut their welfare by 22%. They acted like a bully when they implemented Bill 26. We actually had a member sit here a whole night in agony and pain, you may recall, about two years ago at this time in order to force the government to hold public hearings on this bill in January 1996.

The government acted like a bully when it took on the OPSEU workers and then the doctors. They took on the doctors, and lo and behold —

Interjection.

Mr Gerretsen: I've got one of the members here from the NDP pleading for more information on this; I know he is. The doctors actually won. They actually won. They beat the government down; they retreated. I wonder why.

Then they went on with their bullying tactics against the teachers. The Premier and the Minister of Education actually said in this House and elsewhere that the education system in Ontario was in a serious state of affairs and they attacked teachers on a daily basis, yet at the same time they went over to Europe to try to get more industry here and said: "Come to Ontario. We are the number one country in the world. Come to the number one province of this number one country as far as the quality of life is concerned."

Mr Rollins: Come by Kingston.

Mr Gerretsen: As I always say to people, our quality of life has an awful lot to do, to the member for Etobicoke-Humber, with the good, quality programs out there that are provided for the people of Ontario at the local, provincial and federal levels. They're not the whole thing, but the fact that those programs are out there, the fact that health care is available and accessible to people on a universal basis and the fact that education ought to be out there available for people, whether they are youngsters just ready to obtain knowledge or whether they're older people in their 20s and they need to go back in order to get that life skill training, in order to get those educational requirements etc, in order to meet those new job requirements of the 21st century.

1950

A lot of those things you have put at risk by the kind of actions that you've taken. Maybe you don't know it yet, sir, but you have. You have put them at risk, and I think that more and more people in Ontario are starting to realize that. It all stems and starts with the regulatory powers that ministers have been given in Bill 160, and we ought to be careful that the regulatory powers that are being transferred in Bill 140 are not of the same nature,

and I hope they are not, but we always have to be very vigilant.

Having said all that, let me assure the members of the government that we will be supporting this bill, but we also want to make sure the people of Ontario realize we have to be as vigilant as possible over the next couple of years while this government is still in power, to make sure that some of the drastic things that have happened over the last two to two and a half years will not continue. Maybe then the people of Ontario can retake this province and really build it up to the best province in the best country in the world as we head into the 21st century. Thank you very much for your undivided attention.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Pouliot: We will be supporting Bill 140. It is concise, fairly straightforward, and therefore, like Henry VIII said to his wife, "I won't keep you too long this evening."

But a few words of caution. The government must not, through Bill 140, allow a financial services monolith or a mega-bureaucracy, because this is centralization. What's happening here, Speaker? What are we debating under the auspices of Bill 140? You would in business — I know you to have a strong and prominent business background — be talking about a merger; well, the close cousin to a merger, sort of a takeover where three becomes one, or a stock split where you would have three for one if you wished.

What's in and what's out? This is important. The Ontario Insurance Commission, in; the Pension Commission of Ontario, they're in also; and the deposit institution. There's a fusion. They merge and they become one, with one superintendent of financial services, one very important person. In fact, at committee someone asked the question whether the superintendent of this now big, mammoth institution would have the same clout as the Minister of Finance. This is big time; this is noblesse oblige. When you see her, or more likely him, just picture in your mind a main person, because we will be watching very, very closely. We're cautioning the government about giving that much power to someone.

They will administer the changing world of pensions. I'll give you an example, because it's changing out there very rapidly and very significantly. You have groups of employees who are still under a defined pension plan; for instance, 500 people at the ABC Steel Co. Corporations, companies, employers are getting away from this arrangement. Today they wear another accoutrement. If you're by contract and you have some past service, what they will do is go from a defined to a commuted, to buyout. From a commuted, then you'll have to enter the institution of a locked-in retirement arrangement, and in order to get some money out, you'll have to go from a locked-in to a life income fund, and it's very restrictive.

At the present time, when you reach the ripe old age of 80, you must annuitize. In other words, you fork over the money, you shell out your pension money to an insurance company and they annuitize you. Annuities, given today's very low rate of interest, don't yield too much. Take the

case of someone in the riding of Lake Nipigon. A person who has worked for a company for over 30 years gets a settlement of \$171,000 — a true story; we're monitoring it closely. The person is in his late 50s. The money is locked in. He now has access to the money, but he has a maximum.

Don't wave that book at me. You're talking about an RSP. This is a different kind of RSP arrangement. Yes, they both pay a minimum, but under your RIF there's no maximum. Here's the catch. Here's the inconsistency. Here is what the pension commission superintendent will have to address.

Interjection.

Mr Pouliot: It's \$171,000; terminal cancer. He wants to go back to England to visit relatives. It's his money, but he can only access 7.5% out of \$171,000. The money will be there, but he won't be. This is the responsibility of the new superintendent, except the person will be very, very busy. The person will be asked to monitor and also to police — the same person. Conflict? Hopefully not. You'll be dealing with people who are most ethical, who value statutes, so it shouldn't be problematic; nevertheless, it's certainly worth a word of caution. The same people who monitor the system are the people who self-regulate, not each and every one of them, but the heavies, the puppeteers if you wish, the choreographers, the architects, the engineers, and the legislation does not address it. It's the same people. You go outside, take off your hat and put on another hat to perform a related duty. We're just saying, with respect, not imputing motives, that we will have to be careful.

Who's out? The securities and the banks are out. They are not included in this. Nevertheless, this is a megamenu, this is many courses, this is big time, and we will be watching carefully.

On Monday we had the beginning of a slow but systematic and deliberate death of the education system

through Bill 160. On Tuesday we were confronted with Bill 152, which is the downloading bill, the new responsibilities that will start right after Christmas, January 1. Yesterday we had the final assault, the mechanism —

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): Coup de grâce.

Mr Pouliot: The coup de grâce — the taxes to make all this domino theory happen. So today is a departure from form. It's not nearly as consequential, not as telling, not as impacting. There is not the human dimension that you'll find under 160, 152 and 149. This is nuts and bolts, a bill without soul. It makes it somewhat simpler. It saves the government \$3.8 million.

Another caution: Credit unions administer the savings of average people, mostly middle-class people, ordinary citizens. They're asking: "What will the cost be? Can you tell me a year ahead of time what the cost will be to participate? What will be my fee?" That's a very logical question in any business, in any endeavour. Before you buy in or if you're forced to buy in, you must know the price. I see people shaking their heads in unison across. It goes without saying.

Bill 140 will make it simpler and we will be supporting it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Further debate?

Mr Baird has moved third reading of Bill 140. Is it the pleasure of the House the motion carry? Carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Orders of the day.

Hon Cameron Jackson (Minister without Portfolio [Seniors Issues]): Mr Speaker, I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House the motion carry? Carried. This House is adjourned until 10 o'clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 2002.

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No. 256A



N° 256A

ISSN 1180-2987

**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

First Session, 36th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Première session, 36^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Thursday 4 December 1997

Jeudi 4 décembre 1997

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Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 4 December 1997

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 4 décembre 1997

*The House met at 1002.
Prayers.*

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

PROTECTION AGAINST PEDOPHILES ACT, 1997

LOI DE 1997 SUR LA PROTECTION CONTRE LES PÉDOPHILES

Mr Brown moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 145, An Act to provide protection against pedophiles by preventing them from working in direct contact with children / Projet de loi 145, Loi prévoyant la protection contre les pédophiles en empêchant ceux-ci de travailler en contact direct avec des enfants.

Mr Jim Brown (Scarborough West): There is no crime as reprehensible as child sexual abuse. Pedophiles are the stuff parents' nightmares are made of and pedophiles tend to be serial offenders. The majority continue to offend throughout their lives.

Several recent stories in the media have brought the issue of pedophilia into the forefront of public consciousness. Gordon Stuckless molested several young boys at Maple Leaf Gardens in the 1970s and 1980s. One of his victims took his own life last month, following what was widely considered to be a very light sentence for the offender.

Coach Graham James also preyed on young boys. His victims included NHL player Sheldon Kennedy when he was a kid. Many more players bravely came forward. A minor sports coach took advantage of our kids.

Joseph Fredericks was on parole for abduction and sexual assault. He was released into the Brampton community while on parole. He applied to coach minor baseball. While he was on parole he abducted, sexually assaulted and murdered Christopher Stephenson.

These highly publicized cases are really only the tip of the iceberg of the problem of pedophilia. The *Globe and Mail* quoted a Metro police document that showed almost 3,000 sexual assaults on children over a two-year period. There were also nearly 1,000 sexual interferences with a minor charge for the same period.

Experts estimate that one in four girls and one in eight boys experience sexual abuse as a child. An Australian study of 232 convicted pedophiles revealed they had each

committed offences with an average of 76 children before they were caught. Pedophiles are serial offenders.

Dr William Glaser, a Melbourne, Australia, forensic psychiatrist said most pedophiles are "long-term offenders who have multiple victims." Sex offenders are the oldest group in the prisons. Burglars, car thieves and brawlers all give up their criminal careers in their 30s, but pedophiles keep on going.

Pedophiles are cunning and devious offenders who tend to be good with children, which is why they are so dangerous. They groom their child victims, building a complex relationship which, for the child, is exploitive and loving, cruel and kind, perverted and normal all at the same time. The average age of child sexual abuse victims is only 11 years old. Pedophile offenders are repeat offenders. Many pedophiles live in society undetected for years. Of those who are caught, the rate of recidivism is alarmingly high.

A study published by the American Psychological Association followed 115 child molesters after being discharged from prison. The recidivism rate was 14% at three years after discharge, 30% at 10 years and 52% at 25 years after release. Rapists have a disproportionately high rate of recidivism. A study on reoffence rates conducted at Brandeis University found child molesters were 100% more likely than rapists to reoffend. For many pedophiles, child sexual abuse is a lifetime pursuit, broken up only by jail terms if caught and convicted.

While most of us would like to believe that once a pedophile sex offender is convicted the danger has passed, that is rarely the case. The average sentence length of all sex offenders admitted to federal custody in Canada in 1995 was only four years and three months. Take away time for good behaviour or possible early release, and the threat is unbelievably high. In fact, time actually served averages at about 1.5 years.

In early 1996, a Hamilton court sentenced pedophile Keith Legere to a three-year probation because he violated a court order to stay away from children. The court order breach came as a result of approaching two toddlers. In 1988, the same man served only three years for the manslaughter of a six-year-old boy.

The Internet is full of sites catering to pedophiles, with sickeningly extensive collections of child pornography. Law enforcement agencies find the authors of these perverse Web sites very difficult to trace. The United Kingdom's "dæmon" Web server, often criticized for allowing its members to post illicit and illegal material, even has a page explaining ways to make your Web page more diffi-

cult to trace. Recent years have seen several child sex rings and child pornography rings in our own suburbs.

Because of the nature of their crimes, pedophiles often seek positions of trust with children, like coaching sports or leading community youth groups. Detective Wendy Leaver of the Metropolitan Toronto Police sexual assault squad said that school board screening policies are inconsistent across the province. Yes, school board screening policies are inconsistent. Some boards ask job applicants and would-be volunteers to submit to police screening, but most do not.

She wrote: "The pedophile is someone who is quite well known in the community and is going to be found working with children and knowing everything about children. What we observe in pedophiles is they love children and that is their whole goal in life. Screening is important, especially in the wake of an arrest of an elementary school principal in Burnaby, BC, charged with pornography and child sex offences."

Detective Leaver said that some schools are reluctant to call the police even if they suspect an employee of abusing children because they are worried about the school's reputation. In fact, the OSSTF manual specifies accused teachers must meet with the principal and victim to try to resolve the problem before police are called.

Pedophiles can walk into a room with a bunch of kids and in 10 minutes know who to target. They seek to win over the children with attention, affection and gifts. They do not attack them; they romance them. It is terrible and tragic when a child is abused by someone in a position of trust. It is unthinkable and unbearable when a child is abused by someone who has been given a position of trust despite a history of pedophilia.

1010

I've been a minor hockey coach and have worked on a minor hockey board of directors. It's terribly difficult to know what kind of people you have volunteering to be coach. At least my bill will give people who select volunteers the tools to have some peace of mind. At least parents will be assured that they did not just deliver their child into the hands of a convicted pedophile or sexual offender.

What my bill proposes is very simple. My bill will make sure your child's sports coach, scout leader or teacher is not a convicted pedophile. To ensure this, every person who wishes to work or volunteer in a trust position with children will have to submit to a police record search. For a small fee and signed waiver given to the police, the police will search the person's record for any prior convictions for pedophile offences, and if there are none, the police will issue a letter stating that the applicant has not been convicted of pedophilia or sexual offence. That letter is to be delivered to the employer or organization. Failure to obtain such a letter results in a fine for the organization.

The screening procedure is already being practised by Big Brothers of Canada. The Canadian Hockey Association has incorporated this police check as part of its league policy. This bill is not a perfect solution to the problems of pedophilia in our society. It probably won't even stop the

majority of them. However, if this bill can save one child, one kid from the nightmare of sexual abuse, then this bill must become law. Children have a right to their childhood. They have a right to their innocence and they have a right to be kept as safe as possible from monsters like Joseph Fredericks and Graham James and hundreds more like them.

My bill has received support from the Metropolitan Toronto Police department, the Peel Regional Police, the Association of Children's Aid Societies, the Canadian Hockey Association and the Ontario Women's Hockey Association.

I would ask everyone in this House to support this bill and continue to work to protect our children, our biggest asset.

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): I should indicate at the outset we're going to be supporting Mr Brown's bill. I listened to his comments in advocating the bill. I appreciate his reference to expertise that he's consulted. I'm surprised, however, that he didn't refer to the expertise that's homegrown right here in the Toronto area, the Ontario Correctional Institute, OCI, in Brampton. I'm grateful to the professional staff there for having provided some insight into the issue, and specifically with respect to what this legislation hopes to achieve.

As you know, one of the programs OCI engages in is the treatment of pedophiles. Everybody acknowledges that historically treatment of pedophiles hasn't been particularly successful. A number of techniques and approaches have been utilized. Ultimately the real protection for our children is going to come from the effective cessation of pedophilic activity on the part of adult pedophiles.

OCI is one of the institutions that's slated to be shut down by this government. OCI, with its milieu therapy, has overcome some of the frustration of the past by demonstrating a particularly high success rate at treatment of pedophiles. In fact OCI was selected by the American Correctional Association to receive the 1997 Exemplary Offender Program Award for all of North America. It was presented in August down in Florida. The deputy minister went. I suppose, had it been February or March, the minister himself would have been down there receiving the award.

One of the issues about pedophilia is that although not every victim of a pedophile becomes a pedophile, almost every pedophile has been a victim. I think that's something that should be at the forefront of any discussion about this.

This government, which has talked a big game about victims' rights and responding to victims' needs and indeed passed the Victims' Bill of Rights, the Attorney General having sponsored that piece of legislation, is more notable in its failure to respond to victims and its failure to address victims' rights than it is in any observance of its responsibilities vis-à-vis the Victims' Bill of Right, be it in spirit or in terms of the letter of the legislation.

One of the things that I think Mr Brown and all of us should concern ourselves with is the need to intervene at a very early stage and to intervene effectively when we witness or when we're confronted by victims of sexual

abuse, the sort of thing Mr Brown talked about. Yes, he's been very candid in indicating that this bill addresses only a small piece of the problem, a very small piece of the problem.

One of the other things I learned from speaking with the professional staff at OCI, an incredibly valuable resource in this province that's slated to be dismantled by this government, is that most pedophiles by the time they're convicted and imprisoned have committed a number of pedophilic acts, have subjected a number of children to their perversion. I'm not criticizing Mr Brown, and I think he's well aware that the act of course only deals with convicted pedophiles, people who have already reached that point — and almost inevitably after that trail of victims — where they're finally convicted.

One of the luxuries pedophiles enjoy is the fact that children are less inclined to become complainants. They're more inclined to keep that dirty little secret to themselves, out of fear, out of shame, any number of things. If we're going to address this issue we have to be developing institutions in our communities and programs whereby children are assured of a positive response to their complaint about having been victimized by adults by way of sexual abuse, or quite frankly any other form of abuse.

We're going to support the legislation. Mr Brown indicates that it will — and if it only does save but one child from the sort of abuse that's so horrific, it will have been successful. But we certainly have to do more.

I would call upon Mr Brown, and I say this in all sincerity, to prevail upon his Solicitor General and his Premier to rethink the goal of closing down OCI, the Ontario Correctional Institute in Brampton, to rethink the prospect of privatization of correctional services.

We have the single most effective program for treating sexual offenders, pedophiles, right here in Ontario at the Ontario Correctional Institute. As a result of them receiving the Exemplary Offender Program Award, they've been contacted by institutions internationally, from throughout the world, with inquiries about this very unique type of therapy and treatment that's being engaged in at OCI.

The last thing we want to do at this point in time is ring the death knell for a very successful treatment program that's been developed by very competent, skilled, dedicated staff at the Ontario Correctional Institute. The alternatives being offered up by the Solicitor General and the Ministry of Correctional Services to OCI are specifically incapable of doing the very things that the professional staff and the correctional staff at OCI have been engaging in for some time now.

1020

I say to you, Mr Brown, we're supporting this legislation, but please rethink and call upon your Premier to rethink the privatization of correctional services and the closure of a number of institutions but in particular the Ontario Correctional Institute. You may well have consulted them and simply not referred to them during the course of your comments in the brief time you had to speak to your bill, but if you haven't, please do so. I'm confident that they're eager to talk to you and to explain to

you the success they've achieved over the course of a considerable period of time with their unique therapy program for pedophiles.

Let's also rethink our commitment to victims. I say once again, although not every victim of sexual abuse becomes a pedophile, almost every pedophile has been a victim. We've got to stop the cycle, because that's inevitably what it is.

This bill doesn't protect organizations from the unconvicted pedophile. That's acknowledged, that's apparent. It doesn't mean the bill should be defeated or should be criticized, but the bill is but a small piece of what should be a far greater plan to protect children in our society. If the state has any single obligation that's paramount, surely it's to protect the weakest in our community, the weakest in society, and that, I tell you, includes children, inevitably one of our most valuable resources if not our single most valuable resource, our children.

This government has acquired by now a litany, a pattern of abandonment of children. Quite frankly, its most recent attack is by way of Bill 160 on public education. The defunding of public education here in Ontario, I tell you, is an attack on children. Its bungling mismanagement of the family support plan, more specifically the Attorney General's mismanagement, his incompetent mismanagement of the family support plan, is an abandonment of children. The slashing of assistance rates for moms and their kids by 22% has forced children into yet deeper poverty.

Still, we support Bill 145, but we also call upon this government to contemplate and to reflect on what it has done to children in the course of two years and a few months. I'm confident that no single person in this chamber is going to fail to support Mr Brown's legislation. But I'm equally confident that there's no single member in this chamber who, if candid — and I include the Conservative backbenchers and, quite frankly, their cabinet as well — can't understand that this government has acquired a pattern of victimizing children in its own right.

I understand the politics of Bill 145. I understand that it's a fast hit in the press. I have no doubt the Toronto Sun is going to cover it, and I applaud Mr Brown for his initiative in bringing it forward and, quite frankly, his cleverness at addressing an issue that's going to generate with it some publicity. Good for you. But the mere fact of having a column or two in the Toronto Sun does not relieve any member of this government from the responsibility they have to take for having acquiesced in any number of policy moves that have very specifically victimized kids in our province.

I say to Mr Brown and to the gaggle of Tory backbenchers present today, use this opportunity, use Bill 145, use your support of it and your concern about children in our society as a means to address your members of cabinet and your Premier about the litany of attacks on children, of attacks on the weakest. I look forward to this bill going to committee and I think it should. There are a number of institutions and individuals here in the province and perhaps beyond who could well address this bill by way of

their presentations in the committee process to enhance our understanding of the victimization that Mr Brown is attempting to address, my vision of children as victims of sexual abusers.

The process would be one wherein we may well be able to persuade Mr Brown and others to preserve OCI and its treatment program for pedophiles, to understand that it has become the hallmark internationally, that it has achieved success where no other program admittedly has and that the real issue of pedophilia is one of stopping the cycle. Once again, if we don't address the needs of victims promptly and effectively, we stand a high risk of those victims — and not every victim becomes a pedophile — becoming abusers in their own right.

I would look forward to participating in that committee process. I would hope that the staff of OCI would be called upon to speak to it and I would hope that this government, in the course of doing that, would recognize the incredible resource that we have in Ontario Correctional Institute and, quite frankly, other correctional institutions across the province, many of them slated to be shut down and privatized, after which none of them will be able to pursue or achieve the goals that all of us would purport to aspire to.

Mr Bob Wood (London South): I rise to support this bill. I think it's an excellent initiative which will be a major step forward in protecting our children from predators. I would hope it would go to an appropriate committee of the Legislature, where detailed refinement can be considered. I'd like to suggest a few areas for such refinement.

The scope of the bill is currently very broad and may require narrowing in order to focus on children who are at actual risk from pedophiles. The current wording could affect persons who are employed in positions where they have some low-risk contact with children that is unlikely to result in further criminal behaviour.

The bill may have problems with the Ontario Human Rights Code, which prohibits discrimination in employment on the basis of a criminal record for individuals who have received a pardon that has not been revoked. Refusing to hire or terminating the employment of pardoned pedophiles may therefore be a violation of the code.

The continuing responsibility would seem to be placed on employers in terms of verifying that an individual has not been convicted of a sex offence involving children. Although employers are given six months to check existing employees and can require a records check from new employees, the bill is silent as to the requirement for employers to confirm that employees have not committed a sex offence since the last records check. For example, how often should the check be required? This may prove onerous for both employers and employees who have no record and who may be required to pay for record checks on a regular basis.

There is some inconsistency in the definition of "sexual offence respecting a child" that requires clarification. The definition includes a list of offences if the victim was

under 18 years of age. However, several of these offences are applicable only to children under 14 years of age.

We all know of instances where predators have had access to and have victimized children. This bill is a major step forward, and I hope all members of the House will support the bill.

1030

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): In just referring back to the comments made by the member for London South, maybe that's one of the reasons why this bill should go to committee: There may be some problems with it and they may have to be ironed out at the committee stage. Obviously, some inquiries have to be made to make sure that it is constitutionally all right and that it fits within the Canadian and Ontario human rights legislation.

Just at the outset, I'd like to congratulate the member for Scarborough West in bringing this bill forward, because I think it's a bill that is well thought out. I will be supporting it, but I think we also have to take into consideration some of the comments made earlier by the member for Welland-Thorold.

It's all right to say we don't want our children in any way or shape to be involved with pedophiles. I think we would all agree with that. I can't think of a more horrendous situation than somebody entrusting their children, whether in a recreational environment or an educational environment, and then having that essential trust being betrayed by an individual who turns out to be a pedophile. The kind of emotional effects that it has on individuals, and indeed on the families, I wouldn't want to contemplate. It must be absolutely horrendous.

But that's only one aspect of it. Yes, they shouldn't be in contact with them. Yes, they shouldn't be involved with them in any kind of activities. But that doesn't deal with the problem of what you do with the pedophiles. Whether or not we like to admit it or face it, these people do live in our society and obviously we want to do whatever possible to make sure that they don't perpetrate any crimes, whether it's within the context, as suggested in this bill, or in any other way.

That's why treatment is so important. The purpose of treatment shouldn't be so they can be totally rehabilitated and therefore start working with children again, but just treatment in general to make sure they don't do these kinds of activities with children under any circumstance. That's why I think it is completely shortsighted to have the rather successful treatment programs that are out there through the Ontario Correctional Institute in effect curtailed or abolished. We have to try to treat these people, we have to somehow deal with them or else they're going to offend, whether it's in the context of this kind of legislation or elsewhere.

That's why I commend the member for Scarborough West for starting this process. I think the bill is well thought out and it also allows for some changeover provisions to take place so that no one is all of a sudden placed in a position where one day they are a law-abiding citizen and the next day, because they may have hired one of

these people to work with children under 18, they are in contravention of the law.

I keep going back to this and I spoke about this last night as well. We have to go back to the Provincial Auditor's report as to how he views the courts administration process in the province of Ontario. When you look at the fact that currently there are 224,000 criminal cases outstanding, which happens to be the same number that were outstanding at the time when all the Askov controversy started some eight or nine years ago — and you may recall, as a result of the Askov decision, there were about 50,000 cases thrown out of court.

Mr Peter L. Preston (Brant-Haldimand): It may have been the Liberals.

Mr Gerretsen: It may have been the Liberals, somebody said. It may have been as a result of the Liberal government. Quite frankly, I don't care at this stage and I don't think anybody else does. The point is that we are back to the same position we were eight or nine years ago, where we've got the same number of cases outstanding as we did in those days, and now what's going to happen? Are we going to hit the situation again where, all of a sudden, somebody one of these days is going to turf another 50,000 cases that are legitimately before the court out of the system and potentially let a lot of people go loose, as it were, without ever having been tried on crimes or criminal situations which have been properly laid before the courts?

What all that addresses is the question of resources. If you don't put adequate resources into the criminal justice system to make sure that these cases are dealt with in a speedy and expedient fashion, then you are going to run into those risks. I think that if all of a sudden another 50,000 cases were thrown out, it would do an awful lot of damage to the criminal justice system and to the confidence that the people of Ontario have in our system.

I'll just read you two sentences from the Provincial Auditor's report. He states, for example, "Despite the initiatives" — and this is on page 29 of the report. The Provincial Auditor is an individual hired by this Legislature. He is not hired by the government, he is not a government official but basically reports directly to the Legislature without any influence from the government of the day. And what does he say? He states, "Despite the initiatives taken to date, the following chart indicates that the backlogs have been increasing since 1994 and have the potential to develop into a situation similar to the one which resulted in the Askov decision." Of those 224,000 cases, by the way, 70,000 are more than eight months old, so they could very well be thrown out on the basis of Askov.

It goes on to say, "Even though most factors contributing to delays in cases being heard are beyond the program's control, it can exercise considerable control in ensuring courtroom availability and providing adequate information to the judiciary and the crown attorneys."

There are problems within the Ministry of the Attorney General that have to be dealt with to ensure that the laws that we make here and to ensure that the Criminal Code,

which is a law that is made in Ottawa, are adhered to and are followed and are respected. This kind of law being proposed by the member for Scarborough West will once again, as you add to the volume of laws that are out there, put an extra burden on our police officers, on our enforcement agents within the department of the Solicitor General and also within the Attorney General's department.

I think it is totally shortsighted to limit the resources that are available within the Attorney General's department and the Solicitor General's department, because we can have all the best intentions that there are in the world — we can have them all — but if we cannot enforce the laws that we pass here and if we actively take away resources from the enforcement agents, then in effect we are not doing anybody any favours. It's almost like a shell game. It's almost like we're trying the best that we can but at the same time we're not putting the enforcement mechanisms into place.

The other aspect of course — and the irony that I find about the Provincial Auditor's report is that it deals with the courts administration area — is this whole area of uncollected fines. Here we have \$139 million outstanding in fines and offences that have been committed under the Highway Traffic Act, where the auditor says, "In most cases we know the licence numbers; we know the addresses of the individuals who owe the fines; we have the mechanisms in place" — you know, if somebody owed you some money privately and you got a judgement against that person, you could enforce that judgement by either garnishing that person's bank account or wages or you put a lien or a judgement, an execution, against their house and, sooner or later, you're going to get paid.

What does the Provincial Auditor say about that? He states, "We note that none of these measures" — and the measures that he's referring to are the requiring of banks to deduct money owing from the person's bank account or registering a lien against a person's real property — "We note that none of these measures have been initiated by the ministry." He goes on to say, "While we recognize these measures would not be practicable in every case, some could be effective depending upon the nature of the case and the amounts of the fines."

There are 116 individuals who have fines totalling more than \$10,000. I don't know what your experience has been but I know that when I get the odd \$53 parking ticket or speeding ticket or what have you — and yes, I've got them; I'll be the first to plead guilty — if you don't pay it in time, you get a notice and then you'd better pay up pretty quickly or else they're going to be after you.

1040

For the life of me I cannot understand how we can have 116 individuals — we know who they are — running around this province, driving around this province, owing \$10,000 in fines each under the Highway Traffic Act. It is beyond my imagination how that could possibly happen. How do these people get away with it? They shouldn't get away with it because that \$139 million is owed to you and me, to the taxpayers of Ontario.

As I said before, that money could be used to pay down the provincial debt. Remember, we will still have a debt of \$120 billion by the time this government is finished. It started at \$100 billion when they took over, and it's going to rise by another \$20 billion to \$120 billion by about the year 1999. I think in interest it costs about 15 cents out of every dollar. It's not as bad as Ottawa yet, but it's getting up there. We could be taking this money and paying it down on the debt or on the deficit for any particular year.

We could even put it into good useful programs such as the treatment of pedophiles at the Ontario Correctional Institute.

I know there is the attitude, and when we hear of these horrendous crimes these people commit all of us at times feel, "Why don't we just lock them up and throw away the key." The problem is that's not the answer in the long run because sooner or later most of these people come back into society, and whether they are involved in the kind of activities dealing with children envisioned by the member for Scarborough West's bill or whether they are just walking around in the general public, if these people have not gone through a treatment program of sorts, they are likely to commit a crime again, another act of pedophilia.

It is to all of our advantages, and particularly of the youngsters surely in our society, that it doesn't happen. Our initial reaction, "Lock them up and throw away the key," isn't going to work in the long run. That's just a gut reaction. We've got to deal with the problem.

If you collect the \$139 million that's outstanding in Highway Traffic Act fines, I'm sure that will go a long way to run the program they do at the Ontario Correctional Institute. The \$139 million that's outstanding to you and me is only part of it, because these are Highway Traffic Act fines but in other uncollected fines there is owing an additional \$316 million. Can you imagine? This is right in his report again, on page 36. So when we add the \$316 million plus the \$139 million, there's almost half a billion dollars in uncollected fines and penalties that we're not doing a heck of a lot about in this province.

Mr Kormos: That would have paid for the pension buyout.

Mr Gerretsen: It would have paid for the pension buyout. It would pay for all sorts of programs. It could even be applied to the debt. What always gets me is that we have now elected a government that likes to carry on the business we do here in a businesslike fashion. Well, I know in my own business that if I were owed this kind of money, I'd try to collect it. If you want to run it in a businesslike fashion, use some businesslike tactics to get these legitimately owed fines paid.

Having said all that, I'm very pleased to support the bill put forward by the member for Scarborough West. It's a start, but let him get after the Attorney General and the Solicitor General to make sure that some of these other issues I've talked about are addressed as well.

Mr Preston: I rise today to speak to Bill 145, the Protection Against Pedophiles Act, 1997. Normally I would say I'm pleased to speak to a point in the House, but there is no pleasure in this subject at all.

In 28 years of involvement with youth, I don't only suspect the horrendous devastation; I know of the horrendous devastation these individuals cause. It takes a very strong individual to overcome the emotional trauma that is caused. Indeed, most of them don't completely overcome it. They carry the emotional scars for life. They only deal with it. Because these pedophiles earn the trust of children, the children somehow feel they are to blame — totally unreasonable, but that's the child mind.

I'm not naïve enough to think this bill will eradicate the pedophiles, but it will alert us to reoffenders. It won't catch those who are beginning their heinous career or those who have not been caught before, but it will put community organizations in a situation where they at least know that they are not taking on an already convicted pedophile or sexual offender. How many times, when these things come to light, do we say: "That person's been convicted before. My God, how could this happen? Doesn't anybody check on these things?" This bill will at least prevent the reoffending in our community organizations.

I use the term "community organizations" possibly to redundancy, but I don't want to inadvertently point out a particular organization in the community that may give the idea that this is a place where the occurrences are more prevalent. The number of people who are of good character, excellent people, caring, who work with children, who volunteer to work with children, 999 out of 1,000 are excellent, doing an irreplaceable job. This bill will catch the one who wants to use that position of trust to prey on children.

The pedophile situation is becoming more prevalent. It's front-page, ever more occurring. It's a nightmare. Parents are questioning the wisdom of sending their children out into these community activities, and what a loss that is for the children.

We demand that the people who handle our money are bonded because, boy oh boy, we've got to protect our money. We demand that the people who handle our affairs are licensed because, boy oh boy, we have to protect our chattels and goods. But we send our children out into the community in the care of individuals for hours on end, without a thought, or we did in the past. Parents are becoming very leery of doing that now. Possibly this bill can give them some modicum of security in at least knowing they're not sending their child out into the arms of a known pedophile.

We must ask that any person who is to be employed or volunteers into a position where constant contact with children is endemic to their responsibilities take the little step of providing a letter saying they have not been convicted of a sexual offence or as a pedophile, a small thing to ask of the people who are going to be dealing with our children.

1050

Mr David Tilson (Dufferin-Peel): Today appears to be Scarborough day in the Legislature. The member for Scarborough West is making a presentation with this specific bill that is before us, and the member for Scar-

borough East also has a bill that we will be debating soon on the topic of volunteerism. Volunteerism has become a most important part of our society today, particularly with young people. It's something we in government, from whatever party, need to encourage.

Every day it seems that we open up the paper and hear reports of convictions involving the topic that the member for Scarborough West has raised today. Just yesterday I took out two clippings reporting on these incidents. A former Boy Scout leader had been charged with sexually assaulting a child. This scout leader's alleged assaults occurred between 1968 and 1974. This person is charged with two counts of indecent assault on a male, gross indecency and buggery.

In the same newspaper there is a report of a sentencing procedure involving a deaf pedophile facing dangerous offender status. He "told police that a tale he had spun about having a boy in his bed for sex was just part of a 'sick game.'" It goes on and talks about how he had been convicted in the past on a number of occasions. Prior to his conviction last spring, in 1996, on this 13-year-old boy, he had three previous convictions of sex charges involving young males in 1989 and a similar offence in New York in 1988. He was also on record for breach of probation for being around children in 1994, as well as a conviction for possessing kiddie porn.

A most serious aspect of our society. The member opposite raised a constitutional issue and he may be right. I think those issues can be dealt with in committee. I believe this bill is constitutional and I think this matter should go to committee for further discussion, or better yet, immediate passage, because I think it's an important bill.

We need to encourage volunteerism. We need to develop trust in our volunteer organizations. We need to be confident that when we send our young children to camp, to scout meetings, to hockey teams, that these problems don't exist. One could say the onus is on the volunteer organizations to do that sort of thing. Well, they don't have that information available, whereas under this bill a volunteer who wishes to volunteer for these types of organizations, goes to a police station, signs a waiver, which is done in some organizations already, and the certificate is given with respect to whether or not there are any convictions registered against this individual.

One raises the question, whether you're talking Boy Scout movements, hockey teams — Mr Brown, the member for Scarborough West, has referred to incidents in the press, just horrible, horrible stories where people are affected. Young people are coming forward 20 years later on how they have been affected by these terrible incidents that occurred when they were young.

It is interesting to look at reports about pedophilia, and this could be dealt with in the committee. Research has provided me with some news clippings from the past. One is from the Hamilton Spectator back in 1994, which was a joint report by the Spectator, the Brantford Expositor, the London Free Press and others, an item called "No Easy Answers." There is a comment by John Kernaghan in that

report: "There is no cure for pedophilia, admit clinicians developing treatments."

Dr Barbaree of the Clarke Institute of Psychiatry says: "There is no cure for child molesters.... Although pedophiles have an average of three to four reported victims each, the actual totals are likely much higher — often more than 100 — because many victims never come forward.... These offenders actively seek solutions that put them in close proximity to children, such as volunteers in organizations catering to children's needs or hobbies."

Grant Harris, a research psychologist: "The latest word on treatment for pedophiles is that since there is no cure, the goal is control."

It is for that reason that I congratulate Mr Brown, the member for Scarborough West, in bringing forward this bill. It's an opportunity in which we in this place can provide further debate as to how we can contribute to encouraging volunteerism, to encouraging trust in our volunteer organizations and how we can play our part in dealing with this issue.

This topic of pedophiles of course has been studied all over the place, as I believe has been mentioned by the member for Welland-Thorold and there are a number of reports. There was one by the Solicitor General of Canada in 1990, who concluded: "A reasonable conclusion from the available literature is that treatment can be effective in reducing sexual recidivism from about 25% to 10% to 15%. No approach will guarantee complete success." There's report after report that comes to that conclusion.

We just can't let the world go by with these young people being affected by these individuals. Young people need to get involved in these organizations, whether they be sports or other types of organizations, church groups; it goes on. It's a suggestion that needs to be pursued.

The Big Brothers of Toronto screens all applicants before allowing them to join the association. They already require a police check before they will accept a volunteer to the program. Those with any convictions are requested to get a pardon before they will be accepted. Certainly those with convictions of molestation would not be admitted.

The Toronto Board of Education also requires a police check on each teaching applicant. The Ontario College of Teachers states that boards have a duty to submit to them any report of misconduct of a sexual nature with a minor by a teacher. These organizations and others are doing things now, and I believe this bill will encourage all organizations to provide this information so that our volunteer organizations can provide the service for young people that they do and develop the confidence that's required in our organizations.

These police checks only show convictions that a person may have. The list of charges is absent. That may be a matter that needs to be pursued as well.

Mr Jim Brown: We have to protect our kids from pedophiles. Pedophiles don't slow down with age like burglars, drug dealers and car thieves. There have been 80-year-olds convicted of pedophilia. We know that pedophiles are serial offenders. They have many victims.

Around the world, the high recidivism rate has caused many jurisdictions to impose chemical castration. That is the administration of a drug to chemically reduce the sex drive. Florida, California, Texas, Oregon, Montana, Germany, Denmark, Switzerland, Sweden mandate chemical treatment to repeat offenders. A US study stated that 66% of the respondents were in favour of chemical treatment for repeat offenders; 92% wanted to know if a known pedophile lived in their area.

My bill, the Protection Against Pedophiles Act, will force all organizations that employ or use people in trust over children to have these people obtain a police screening. The procedure is simple, it works and it is presently a policy with the Canadian hockey federation, Big Brothers and the Ontario women's hockey league.

This bill will keep convicted pedophiles out of our children's sports change rooms, out of their camping trips and out of their classrooms. Community safety, our kids' safety, is paramount. This bill will be mandatory and give volunteer groups the structure, the tools to insist on police screening. Since it is province-wide, pedophiles can't go shopping from community to community for a better deal. For our children, I ask all the members to please support my bill, the Protection Against Pedophiles Act, 1997. Thank you.

1100

GOOD SAMARITAN ACT, 1997

LOI DE 1997 SUR LE BON SAMARITAIN

Mr Gilchrist moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 166, An Act to protect Persons from Liability in respect of Voluntary Emergency Medical or First Aid Services / Projet de loi 166, Loi visant à exonérer les personnes de la responsabilité concernant des services médicaux ou des premiers soins fournis bénévolement en cas d'urgence.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): According to the rules, Mr Gilchrist has 10 minutes to make his presentation.

Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East): I am indeed pleased to stand here today to speak to this bill. It's a bill that hopefully puts a different spin on exactly where our government stands in terms of our outlook on the responsibilities we have to provide stewardship and to ensure that within our society there is always the motivation for people to do their best.

We've all heard anecdotal evidence of people who stop and help others in times of need, whether it's roadside assistance after an auto accident, whether it's someone found choking in a restaurant or any other circumstance of similar emergency need.

Recently here in Toronto we saw someone celebrated for their eagerness to help out as two young boys were threatened with being thrown out of a subway car on to the live power rail. That gentleman, Mr Crowl, was right-

fully celebrated as being a tremendous volunteer, a tremendous representative for all that is best in our society.

Unfortunately, to date we have no protection for people who offer their assistance to others in need. While the courts as yet have not followed the American pattern and have not found people liable in cases where their assistance may have left open the question of whether there was some sort of liability, the fact is that the stories are legion where people have gone to court and been sued after having helped out. At minimum, they have faced the legal expenses and the risk and threat to their assets and to their esteem in the community by having the suits levelled against them.

After one particular example was brought to my attention in June of this year, I believed it was appropriate to research this subject and to see where Ontario stood relative to other jurisdictions both across Canada and throughout North America and around the world. As a result of that research, I ascertained that three provinces in Canada — Alberta, Saskatchewan and Newfoundland — have express good Samaritan bills, as they're known, on their statutes, and every other province in Canada has some exclusion in their health act that at least protects health care professionals from any liability if they stop and offer assistance in circumstances outside of a normal medical or hospital environment. However, even in those provinces the question is left dangling as to whether the general citizenry are protected.

Looking at what has been done in other provinces and the fact that 36 American states have good Samaritan acts and that around the world it is generally recognized that it is important to protect people who offer their assistance to others in times of need, protect them from any civil liability, it's in that spirit that I introduced this bill last week and rise to debate it on second reading here today.

The bill basically is broken into two parts. It recognizes that there has been a different test applied to health care professionals who may offer assistance in cases of emergency medical need. I was very pleased that both the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario, representing registered nurses, and the Ontario Medical Association, representing Ontario's doctors, were pleased to support this bill.

In fact, Dr Ted Boadway, the director of policy for the OMA, joined me at the press conference last week where we first introduced this bill to the public. Dr Boadway is, obviously, a physician himself, with decades of experience in thoracic surgery. He provided personal examples of instances where he himself has stopped to render roadside assistance. He said that the first thing that seizes you is that adrenalin rush — you want to help, it's the natural human instinct to help — but at the same time you're not in your normal operating environment: You don't have your equipment with you; you don't have any other staff to back you up, to give you that second opinion. He said, "There's that moment of doubt, a moment of hesitation." He said, "Knowing how I as a trained MD felt in that circumstance, I can certainly appreciate how someone in the general public, with no medical training, would have

been quite concerned about whether they should be wading in to offer assistance." Of course, he conquered that momentary hesitation and went on to render aid, but the fact remains that if even doctors in this province have that doubt, surely we need a bill like this to clarify the issue once and for all.

Dr Boadway said they have from time to time canvassed doctors, not just in Ontario but across Canada, and the issue is one that has been front and centre in the minds of doctors. They have a very legitimate concern that in our increasingly litigious age we're going to follow the American model and people will be suing for almost anything, and they might be caught up in that mindset.

In 1992 the British Columbia Medical Association commissioned a report that concluded that it was critical that there be some kind of protection for doctors. They outlined the conditions under which such a bill and such protection should apply, and I'm pleased to say that the bill we've put on the order paper here conforms to all five of those points.

What the bill also does, though, over and above protecting health care professionals, is that it very specifically says that anyone else in the public who offers aid to someone in a case of emergency will also be protected from civil liability. The rule of thumb is a very logical one. I'm not a lawyer, but it's been explained to me by legal counsel. Precedent exists that doing things that are the action of a reasonable man or woman will be protected. Gross negligence, on the other hand, will continue to be something that might invite a lawsuit, but gross negligence is defined as doing something that you should know not to do, so that's hardly the category of what we're talking about here today, one would hope. One would hope that everyone who stops at the roadside to render assistance knows their personal capabilities, knows either how to perform first aid or CPR or at least get a blanket and call 911 and offer assistance. This bill will protect anyone who performs those sorts of good Samaritan acts.

The bill also does not prevent someone from reimbursing you. If in the course of performing that duty you use an ambulance and it gets damaged, if other supplies are used, it would be permissible for someone to respect the fact that it did cost you out of pocket and pay you back. But the bill makes it very clear that, particularly for health care professionals, this doesn't relieve them of any kind of obligation to perform the top-quality services we take for granted in this province in hospitals and in their own offices, because the bill says this protects them only where there is not the expectation of being paid. This does not in any way give new protection against any sort of medical suit arising from the work they would be doing in their normal practice, but it does respect the fact that in a circumstance where they're stopping to render aid without the expectation of payment, they will be protected.

The act defines what is a health care professional. That means a member of a college of one of the health professions as set out in schedule 1 of the Regulated Health Professions Act.

I believe the act is very specific, not only in its intent but in its content. In talking to members on both sides of the House, I have yet to discover anyone who has any reservations. I'm very pleased, and I look forward to the comments that come forward during the debate in the next hour.

The bottom line, though, is that we should be celebrating voluntarism. We should be doing anything in our power to promote voluntarism, to promote helping others in times of need. There are any number of circumstances, any number of times in our lives where we will be called upon to make that decision, to make a judgement call about whether we have the capability to help out. I hope this bill in some small way increases the comfort level particularly for health care professionals but also for the general citizenry, that one thing they won't have to worry about is civil liability if they go out there, do their best and serve others in the community in a caring and compassionate way that we would all like to see as the hallmark of life in Ontario.

1110

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): I'll be speaking on this bill very briefly, and then the member for St Catharines will be taking some time as well.

I was somewhat disturbed that the member stated at the outset that this bill is part of the government program or part of what this government believes in. I was under the impression that this is private members' hour and that we bring our concerns in that fashion to this House. I honestly do not understand how this bill fits in with the rest of the government's agenda, because the rest of the government's agenda is something that I and the members of my caucus don't agree with at all. Most of the agenda seems to be to go after the most vulnerable in our society, and I see absolutely no relationship between that agenda and the Good Samaritan Act.

The second point I want to make is that I hope the general public doesn't, as a result of this bill, have some sort of false sense of security that if this bill passes they can no longer be sued by people who may, for whatever reason, feel they weren't properly treated in an emergency situation. I realize it was probably as a result of legal counsel giving this advice, but when you add clauses such as "unless it is established the damages were caused by the gross negligence of the person," I guarantee that if somebody has been helped by a good Samaritan and wants to initiate a court action against that individual, they will allege gross negligence. Whether they can prove it is something else again.

The general public ought not to misunderstand. Once this passes, there may be a smaller likelihood of them being sued by whomever they help, but it's still out there. The person would have to prove gross negligence, which I agree is tough to do under certain circumstances — there would have to be flagrant disregard of the person's security and of how the person is to be helped — but I don't think the general public ought to be under any illusions that somehow this puts an end to all that, that if they are a good Samaritan and help an individual who's in trouble,

whether they're a health care professional or a private individual, they somehow cannot be involved in a court action.

Of course it's like that with respect to most court actions. I always tell individuals, you can't stop somebody from suing you. Whether or not they're able to actually prove what they allege in their suit is one thing, but there's no such thing as not being able to sue somebody else. I suppose to a certain extent what's happening in our Canadian field of justice and legal system is that we are getting closer and closer to and more and more involved in the Americanization of our system, where people do take actions a lot quicker than they would have let's say 10, 20 or 30 years ago.

Other than that, I support this bill, as long as the public is not under the illusion that this will give them a blanket protection with respect to helping people who are involved in emergency situations.

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): It's a most unusual day. The New Democrats find themselves supporting two bills prompted by Conservative backbenchers. I say it is remarkable that we see two bills, Mr Gilchrist's among them, that are non-partisan in nature. Enough said in that regard. I'll not be partisan in my comments.

I want to remind the sponsor of this bill that this isn't the first time a Tory government has had an opportunity to consider good Samaritan legislation. Mr Gilchrist, I hope your colleagues are kinder to you than Tory backbenchers were back in 1984, when Ray Haggerty, the member for Niagara South, for whom I have the highest regard and continue to have high regard — he's well, and working in those communities in Niagara South. Ray Haggerty sponsored a private member's bill in 1984, good Samaritan legislation. He was a Liberal opposition member at the time. The Conservative government of that day let it die without calling it to be enacted into law. I hope you're more successful than Mr Haggerty was and I hope your Conservative colleagues are kinder to you than they were in 1984 to Mr Haggerty. It was very non-partisan and well-intentioned legislation, very similar to yours as contained in Bill 166.

You've spoken of some of the background. Interestingly, the first good Samaritan legislation in North America was, predictably, from the state of California, perhaps one of the most notoriously litigious jurisdictions in all of the United States, in all of North America. It was 1959. The trend soon travelled, as one author put it, northward, where we saw through the 1960s various Canadian jurisdictions considering good Samaritan legislation. Interestingly, back in 1970 the Ontario Law Reform Commission, as I understand it from the literature, recommended against good Samaritan legislation. By some authors, regarding those jurisdictions that had enacted it and the experience they had, the legislation was described as otiose. This may well end up being the case for this bill here in Ontario. As I say, we're supporting it and we welcome it.

One of the observations is of course that Canadian jurisdictions tend not be as litigious for a variety reasons:

mindset, but some other real reasons included. It's been explained by those who have felt there's no need for good Samaritan legislation that the common law as it exists in Ontario and throughout most of Canada, all but one Canadian jurisdiction, in fact protects Samaritans in any event.

Notwithstanding that — and I was particularly grateful for the article written by Mitchell McInnes, "Good Samaritan Statutes: A Summary and Analysis." McInnes speaks of the impact of good Samaritan legislation as not necessarily required to protect Samaritans, but, if that is the case, useful in that it encourages people to act and perhaps addresses the mythology of liability. In that regard alone, I agree with McInnes and I agree with Mr Gilchrist that the statute, this bill, is worthy of support.

Of course, the standard of gross negligence is contained here, a troublesome standard, because it's a very high one, as Mr Gerretsen has already explained. It's a very high threshold indeed. Whether or not the story about Mitch Hepburn and the hitchhiker is merely anecdotal, gross negligence is a standard that injured parties find very difficult to meet.

This bill addresses more so the concerns of health care professionals, because they're more inclined, I suspect, to be conscious of the potential for litigation inherent in their dealing with an injured party or injured persons. I'm confident that most Ontarians, if not all Ontarians, would be eager to address emergencies and traumas that are anticipated or contemplated by this bill without regard for the prospect of litigation. It would tend to be doctors or nurses who would be more conscious of the prospect of litigation.

The bill is modelled on current legislation across North America. Quite frankly, I suspect this bill should go to committee, because it should be addressed by some of the parties who are going to find themselves impacted. There may well be a need for addressing either deficiencies or language in the bill. I can contemplate a number of parties who would be interested in participating in those hearings and I look forward to addressing this bill in committee after today's second reading as well.

1120

Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Centre): It is my pleasure to join in the debate on ballot item 2, standing in the name of Mr Gilchrist, as he has presented Bill 166 before us today. He has carried many bills on behalf of the government, including Bill 81, the Fewer Politicians Act, where we reduced the number of politicians here at Queen's Park from 130 to 103. He also carried Bill 103, the City of Toronto Act, in his role as parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

But he also has brought forward many different private members' bills to this House, like Bill 28, which was An Act to amend the Municipal Act to name Civic Holiday as Simcoe Day here in Ontario for that long holiday weekend in August. He also brought before us Bill 53, which is An Act to Promote Full Financial Accountability of Labour Unions and Employees Associations to Their Members.

These are a lot of bills that he has felt very passionately about, and it's no surprise that he would bring Bill 166 before the House today, which is An Act to protect Per-

sons from Liability in respect of Voluntary Emergency Medical or First Aid Services.

I want to commend him and let him know that I will be voting in favour of his bill because, as he said in his comments, doctors, nurses and other health care professionals will not be held responsible for damages that result from their negligence in acting or failing to act unless the damages were caused by gross negligence, providing that the care was provided at a location other than a hospital or health care facility and that the care was provided voluntarily and without reasonable expectation of reward.

I think this is a good bill because it goes beyond that in that it also protects any other individual who provides assistance at the immediate scene of an accident or other emergency to a person who is ill, injured or unconscious. I think that's very, very important to keep in mind because in Ontario, indeed across Canada, we're trying to encourage people to take part in first aid training courses. In my community of Scarborough, which is the community that Mr Gilchrist hails from as well, all sorts of activities are happening where people are learning first aid and CPR training.

In one high school in my riding, R.H. King Academy, which celebrated its 75th anniversary a couple of weeks ago, they have a program where the students learn all about CPR. What a shame it would be if those students who learned CPR could not use it, if there were other first aid techniques that those students or indeed other people across Ontario had learned but couldn't use because they were afraid they would not be protected from civil liability.

What Bill 166 does is protect everyone in this province who wants to assist an injured person. I think, by assisting injured people in our communities, we are doing everything we can to provide for safer communities. I commend the member for bringing that forward.

He also talked about roadside assistance taking place, where perhaps there was an accident happening and someone drove by and wanted to help an individual there, that they would not fear any civil reprisals for assisting that person.

If we didn't have this bill, if a civil action were to take place in this province where someone did successfully sue at a large cost to someone for helping, those individuals would set an example to the rest of the province and they would not want to help others. I think it would be a sad day in Ontario if that day were to come forward. Mr Gilchrist's bill addresses that and makes for a much safer province because people will want to help their fellow people here in Ontario.

I know he has support from the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario. There is a letter Mr Gilchrist sent to all the members, signed by Doris Grinspun, RN, who is the executive director of the RNAO, who says: "We believe our members will appreciate the explicit statement that they could voluntarily render this type of assistance and that they would not be liable for problems resulting from the assistance, with the exception of those resulting from gross negligence."

I would join Ms Grinspun and all other members of the House who have spoken today to encourage everyone to support Mr Gilchrist's bill. I think it's a worthy bill. The type of bill he has brought forward shows he is a member of principle and is working hard on behalf of his constituents; indeed it shows a lot of compassion for the people of Ontario.

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): It's certainly a pleasure for me to be able to rise and support the member for Scarborough East in his bill, the Good Samaritan Act, Bill 166. I commend him for this thinking and this idea; it's not exactly original, it is in several other states, but I certainly commend him for bringing it forward at this time.

One of the roles of government is to protect our citizens. Certainly the Good Samaritan Act is about that, protecting people from liability when they try to go and help someone else, particularly those in the health professions. However, it also recognizes that it's not about to protect people for stupidity or gross negligence.

I'm certainly very supportive of this bill. You may recall that back in December I brought forward a resolution to provide some protection from liability to volunteers in general. There's no question that people hold back because of this kind of concern. This particular bill is more specific, referred to as the good Samaritan bill. We use this term quite commonly, and really the title comes from our Christian Bible and a parable in that Bible. When asked by a teacher of law, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus responded with the parable of the good Samaritan:

"A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he travelled, came where the man was, and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, took him to an inn and took care of him."

You have to wonder why the priest wouldn't have been doing the very same thing; probably not because of liability but because of the association, and there would be some liability with his peer groups at that time.

This bill recognizes the medical profession in particular. As they arrive on an accident scene with not even a stethoscope to help them, they certainly feel very uncomfortable and concerned about liability. Private citizens coming forward, doing anything from putting pressure on a bleeding point to tourniquets to moving somebody off a busy street, could cause some other kind of damage that they might be sued for, so they get pretty concerned about this kind of thing and step around or try not to get involved. I'm even told that some of our medical professionals have been told by insurers who cover their liability insurance, "Don't get involved, because it may end up

costing you more in liability insurance in the future." I think that's pretty unfortunate.

Doing a little research on this particular bill, I found that the only provinces and territories in Canada without a bill such as this are Ontario, Quebec and Manitoba. As mentioned earlier, it was brought forward in 1984 but did not get passed. In the United States, some 50 states have a total of 110 statutes covering legal protection headed up as good Samaritan bills.

I also think it's interesting to note that in many countries, almost all the countries in Europe, many of the states and even in Quebec, there is a law about duty to rescue when people are in trouble, particularly with their health. People are required to come to their rescue. However it's rather ironic, as you look at Quebec, that they don't have a good Samaritan act to protect their residents from liability, but they do have this requirement in their province that a person seeing somebody else in trouble is liable if they don't come to their rescue. It's kind of an interesting bit of legislation there. I see this as enabling legislation to encourage people to get involved so that people won't be in trouble with liability and be sued for their life earnings and they will be more willing to come forward when they have that opportunity.

I think it warrants a quote at this time from the 20th-century philosopher Kahlil Gibran, who wrote: "You give but little when you give of your possessions. It is when you give of yourself that you truly give." Here we want to protect those people who truly give of themselves.

In winding up, I think this is certainly a very worthwhile bill put forward by my seatmate here, the member for Scarborough East. It's very thoughtfully brought forward at this time. It certainly deserves our support, by all three parties here in the House. I don't think there is any question it's going to receive that. I'd even encourage them to go one step further and give unanimous approval that this receive third reading and we get on and put it in law.

1130

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak in favour of the bill by Mr Haggerty, the member for Erie — I'm sorry: Mr Gilchrist, the member for Scarborough East. I recall as well as the member for Welland-Thorold has that Ray Haggerty, the former member for what was called Erie, and then Niagara South, was an individual who brought forward such a bill and it was compelling at that time. We could have had it in 1984, as a matter of fact, but the Conservative government of the day refused to allow the bill to proceed so it could be in effect, so here we are in 1997, dealing with the issue once again.

Heaven knows we will need a lot of good Samaritans in Ontario for a variety of reasons I can think of. We'll need good Samaritans to keep the hospitals open in the Niagara region because when the person is assisted at roadside, as we would hope the person would be, that person then has to go to a hospital. Well, in the Niagara region, the plan now is to close or radically alter five of the hospitals region.

They want to close the Hotel Dieu Hospital. They want to close or radically change the Douglas Memorial Hospital in Erie, the Port Colborne hospital, the West Lincoln Memorial Hospital in Grimsby, the Niagara-on-the-Lake hospital. I'm wondering if, when the person assists someone in the Niagara region, for instance, they will have a hospital to go to. I doubt that is going to be the case. That is why we'll need other good Samaritans out there to ensure we don't close the hospitals, because I remember, as everyone in the House will, the Premier during the last provincial election campaign saying, and I quote — you will remember me saying this on numerous occasions — "Certainly, I can guarantee you it is not my plan to close hospitals."

We've had several hospitals now that have closed in the province and several that are under the potential axe of the provincial government. I just hope that when someone assists someone at roadside, as I believe they should, as this legislation will enable them to do, there will be other good Samaritans out there to advocate on behalf of the various hospitals that are under threat by the Harris government.

I hope there are good Samaritans out there because once the people leave hospital, they have to have home care, and in the Niagara region we have cutbacks in home care now. People who before were able to get a service from nurses and physiotherapists and housekeepers and so on — this is often the frail elderly who are now being kicked out of the hospital more quickly and more sickly — are being cut back at this very time in their home care services.

I worry whether the person who is helped by the good Samaritan at roadside, for instance, will have hospital care and then will have this home care. So we'll need good Samaritans as well to advocate for more home care in the Niagara region and for not cutting the services out while we're giving a tax cut which will benefit the wealthiest people in our society.

We will need good Samaritans to deal with user fees, which the province is now imposing in the field of health care. I'm worried about that because once the good Samaritan has come to the roadside to help the person who is in the accident, they have to get that person to the hospital, and now we find out that downloaded to the municipalities is ambulance services. I know there are companies on the other side of the border, American companies that charge huge amounts of money for ambulance services, that can't wait to get into Ontario and take over this privatized service. As a result, people will have to pay even more.

I worry about those people who are being helped by the good Samaritan. You can see that there is more than simply assisting the person, as I believe we all should, particularly medical personnel who have some expertise. They have to get them into a hospital, and we're closing hospitals. We have to get them then to home care, and they're cutting back on home care. Then we have to make sure they don't have these user fees for the ambulance, and that there are ambulance services out there for them. We need good Samaritans to advocate there as well.

We need good Samaritans because some of these people are going to have to get health cards. As my colleague from Renfrew North has noted, there are people now who are going to have to come a long way from smaller outlying areas, and these are often people who don't have the capabilities to travel, into a major, I won't say urban area but a town at the very least to get their health care cards, to get that photograph taken. There's great worry about that, so we will need good Samaritans to advocate on behalf of those people. We have to make sure of that.

Sometimes as a result of an accident that takes place on the roadside where the good Samaritan goes to help that person — and we always hope this doesn't happen — people are permanently disabled as a result. We will need good Samaritans to advocate for the disabled, who are worried that they are losing their disability benefits as a result of the changes of policy of the government of Mike Harris. I'll be looking for the good Samaritans advocating on their behalf.

Some of them, as a result of an accident, for instance, may end up needing psychiatric care. It may affect them in a psychiatric sense. Those people will need the psychiatric services of the community. They will need good Samaritans advocating on behalf of those psychiatric services. There are families out there today who are finding it extremely difficult to cope with relatives and perhaps close friends who need psychiatric services. At this time, as governments deinstitutionalize or take people out of major hospitals and place them into the community, we don't see the services in the community.

If you look at the homeless people, many of those homeless people have psychiatric problems that have to be addressed, but when we're busy giving a tax cut of 30% in the provincial income tax, which benefits the wealthiest people in our society, it's difficult to address those needs and we will need those good Samaritans to address those needs.

Indeed, just their peace of mind has to be addressed, so we will need good Samaritans to protect the Niagara Escarpment, because people want to enjoy that peace of mind, that beauty that's around them. If there happened to be an accident that took place near the Niagara Escarpment, people might even be thinking about the Niagara Escarpment and the need for good appointments to the Niagara Escarpment Commission.

I note that one of the people who was appointed to the commission, who we in the opposition opposed strenuously, has now had to leave the commission. I wish I could say I was surprised. I was not. This is what happens when you have the old boys' network that says: "We've got to get good old whoever on the commission because he's been a good Tory supporter and he'll show those pointy-headed professors in Toronto and those pinko environmentalists that we can develop that Niagara Escarpment. We can have the Hilton. We can have golf courses. We can have all kinds of development, because development's good, it'll produce jobs." We'll need good Samaritans to protect the escarpment.

We will need good Samaritans to protect —

Interjection.

1140

Mr Bradley: I always wonder why our good friend the member for Etobicoke-Humber didn't run for the federal Parliament. He sits here as a provincial member. He interjects constantly something about the federal government — all the time. I think he should run federally next time.

I would like to see as well a good Samaritan to help out those who are going to be hurt by the defunding of the education system. We now have a situation where the Ontario government, despite the fact that in Bill 160 the government said, "That has nothing to do with it," they said to the members: "Here's your script. You go out and you say to the people: 'Don't you worry, this bill has nothing to do with funding of education. It's not about taking money out of education.'"

Then, of course, they found —

Interjection.

Mr Bradley: Speaking of bureaucrats — I'm glad there was an interjection, illegal as it might be, because we found the contract from the bureaucrat. The Deputy Minister of Education had right in her contract that she must take an additional \$667 million, two thirds of \$1 billion, out of the education system, on top of the \$533 million — that's over half a billion dollars — already taken out, and the amount that was cemented as a permanent cut as a result of the social contract. So we will need good Samaritans to advocate on behalf of the students of this province, from junior kindergarten to adult education.

We will need good Samaritans to help out with the Minister of the Environment, who has had his budget cut by one third, the staff cut by one third, the resources cut way back, subtle changes made to regulations and some legislative changes that will have a detrimental impact on the environment.

I'm glad my colleague from Scarborough East brought forward a bill that deals with good Samaritans, because we'll need all these good Samaritans. I want to tell him I'm going to vote for it. I'm going to tell the member for Scarborough East I am going to vote in favour of this legislation, because I think with the Harris government in power in this province we will need a lot of good Samaritans; not just the good Samaritans to help out appropriately, as my friend from Scarborough East suggests in this bill, and I want to support that, but also to help out in the many other areas where people are feeling the impact of the oppressive policies of the Conservative government of Mike Harris.

I want to commend the member for bringing forward this legislation.

Mr David Tilson (Dufferin-Peel): I too wish to rise and speak in favour of this bill. This is a good Samaritan bill, and I'm not sure but I think there was a bill called the Donation of Food Act which was passed in 1994, and I believe it may have been under the sponsorship of the leader of the official opposition, but I could be corrected. That bill was to protect the food bank donors.

There have been a number of good Samaritan bills that have passed across this country. I think New Brunswick

and Nova Scotia have one, and I believe there's one here — I think it received third reading; it may even be law — from the leader of the official opposition, as he then was, as a private member in a private member's bill. That was to protect donors or distributors of food from liability for damages arising from injury or death resulting from the food. So the good Samaritan bill is not a new principle in this place. I had a bill several years ago that was similar.

What I believe this bill is trying to do, among other things, is to protect the individual who comes and discovers an accident — it could be a motor vehicle accident — and tries to assist that person. It could be a health professional, it could be a layperson who does their best to assist the person until the appropriate medical authority, a police officer, an ambulance person, a firefighter, comes to provide assistance to that individual, and protect those individuals from civil action.

I might emphasize that the words "gross negligence" are used. Obviously, if there was gross negligence by the good Samaritan, they would not receive assistance. The definition of "gross negligence" is — of course, that's sometimes dangerous because it applies in different situations.

"Gross negligence" — this from Black's law dictionary — "is defined as the intentional failure to perform a manifest duty, in reckless disregard of the consequences as affecting the life or property of another. Gross negligence consists of a conscious indifference, a voluntary act of omission that is likely to result in grave injury when in the face of clear and present danger." And it goes on.

The type of situation — I have an acquaintance, a nurse, who a number of years ago was having coffee in a restaurant. Outside the restaurant an accident occurs. She and her friend, a nurse, went to the assistance of this person — I believe it was a motorcycle accident and he was thrown something like 50 feet. They began CPR. As luck would have it, a passerby who was asthmatic gave them an oxygen tank and a mask he had in the car. As a result, there were problems and these two nurses were sued in a civil action.

The action was subsequently lost, but when that type of thing gets around, that passersby, good Samaritans, who are honestly doing — they were completely exonerated later by a medical examiner who determined in fact that their actions saved the life of this individual. Problems were caused not as a result of the actions of the nurses, but because of the injury itself. The problem was these two nurses were sued. They had to hire a lawyer, they had to pay lawyers' costs and they had to go to court. It didn't get that far, but the very fact of the matter is that it was instituted.

This bill will protect those nurses, if that were to happen today. I might add, the medical examiner said, "Be less intrusive. Just wait for the ambulance to come," to reduce their chances of a lawsuit. That was the advice that was given. We don't want that to happen in our province.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate? The member for Scarborough East has two minutes to wrap up.

Mr Gilchrist: First off, I would like to thank my colleagues on both sides of the House, the member for Kingston and The Islands, the member for Welland-Thorold, the member for St Catharines and of course my colleagues the members for Scarborough Centre, Northumberland and Dufferin-Peel, for their comments. I appreciate very much their expressions of support. It is very important for people to see that this is an issue that does transcend partisan politics, although I was pleased to indulge Mr Bradley the equal air time for his other expressions.

There's no doubt, and Mr Gerretsen raised the issue, that no bill is going to stop people from being able to put forward a lawsuit, but by setting such a high standard of expectations, it will certainly minimize the likelihood of a frivolous lawsuit or one that the proponent of the suit does not believe meets the test of gross negligence. Again, that is expressed by the actions, as my colleague from Dufferin-Peel pointed out, that someone should know not to do.

My colleague from Welland-Thorold correctly pointed out, as did the member for St Catharines, that attempts have been made to introduce similar legislation in this House before. It was something we discovered during our research. I'm disappointed it didn't pass then, but I think it highlights the fact that, even as far back as 1984, members in this House recognized the need to plug this loophole, recognized the need to bring forward legislation that protected volunteers, protected good Samaritans in this province.

As my colleague Mr Newman from Scarborough Centre pointed out, we're making investments — not just the province, but others are making investments, such as the Advanced Coronary Treatment Foundation of Canada that's promoting CPR training in high schools in this province. Given the partnership there, the promotion of volunteerism, the promotion of first aid training, it would be ironic if we had any kind of a barrier in the minds of people or on the statute books. This bill assures that there is no such barrier.

Again I thank my colleagues, and I look forward to their support of this bill now and during third reading.

The Acting Speaker: There being no further debate, pursuant to standing order 95(e), this House is suspended until 12 noon.

The House recessed from 1149 to 1200.

PROTECTION AGAINST PEDOPHILES ACT, 1997

LOI DE 1997 SUR LA PROTECTION CONTRE LES PÉDOPHILES

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): We will deal first with ballot item number 1. Mr Brown has moved second reading of Bill 145. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? It is carried.

Shall the bill be referred to the standing committee?

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): Yes, of justice.

The Acting Speaker: Is it agreed? Agreed. It will be referred to the standing committee on administration of justice.

GOOD SAMARITAN ACT, 1997

LOI DE 1997 SUR LE BON SAMARITAIN

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): We will now deal with ballot item number 2. Mr Gilchrist has moved second reading of Bill 166. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Shall this bill be referred to a standing committee?

Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East): Yes, Mr Speaker, I would ask agreement from my colleagues to refer this bill to the standing committee on general government.

The Acting Speaker: Is it agreed that this is referred to the standing committee on general government? Agreed.

It being a little after 12, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1202 to 1330.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mr Mario Sergio (Yorkview): I wish to address my remarks to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. I would like to bring to his attention the release from Canada Mortgage and Housing Corp of a few days ago where the availability of rental units has taken a sharp drop in most Canadian cities, especially here in Ontario, including St Catharines, London, Oshawa and Ottawa. Here in Toronto we have dropped from 1.2% to 0.8% vacancy rate. I would like to tell the minister that this represents a dramatic drop and it's causing a dramatic situation with respect to those people looking for reasonable accommodation. What this means is that rents are going to skyrocket and the availability of reasonable, affordable accommodation is going to be practically nil.

Those most affected, especially now as we enter the Christmas season, as we enter winter, are the homeless, those people who can't afford anything else. They will have to look for underpasses or bridges to find accommodation this winter.

I'm surprised to see the minister in total inertia, doing nothing about it. I would say to the minister, make it your New Year's resolution and do something about it. Don't wait for the municipalities. It is your job, your responsibility to provide affordable, decent accommodation for the needy people in Ontario.

FAMILY RESPONSIBILITY OFFICE

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): More than a year after the Attorney General's family support plan was

exposed as being non-operational, my constituency office and the constituency offices of my colleagues continue to be plagued by complaints about the ineffectiveness and the bungling that continues to go on at the support plan, Charlie Harnick's supposed Family Responsibility Office.

My staff are plagued with calls of women and children not receiving moneys that have been remitted by their spouses' employers. Their inquiries to the family support plan are met as often as not with an indifference and a mere shrug. One comment received by one of my staff people was, "Why don't these people," to wit, the mother and children, "get their lives together?" implying that it's their fault that they're not receiving the moneys that are being garnished from their ex-spouses' wages.

In another instance it was suggested to one of my constituency staff that it was "only \$500," that family support plan employee of Charlie Harnick not understanding that for that woman and her children, yes, a mere \$500 is a considerable amount of money.

You, Attorney General, have displayed your incompetence, your laziness and your indifference to children and their mothers in this province long enough. It's about time, I tell you, Attorney General, that you resign, that you transfer responsibility for the family support plan to somebody who displays a modest amount of competence.

DRINKING AND DRIVING

Mr Jack Carroll (Chatham-Kent): It gives me great pleasure to rise today and inform the members of the House of a local anti-driving-and-drinking campaign that is taking place in my riding of Chatham-Kent. Operation Red Nose is first and foremost a campaign against impaired driving. It provides, during the month of December, a free designated driver service to motorists who have been drinking, who are not able to drive their own vehicle.

The program, managed and run by local volunteers, aims to improve the safety of our streets not only during the holiday period but throughout the year. The program is designed to enhance our community by building community ties through five common goals: awareness, education, information, prevention and funding local youth organizations.

Operation Red Nose is non-moralistic and is neutral on drinking. The position is simple: If you drink, don't drive. As honorary chair of Operation Red Nose in Chatham-Kent, I would like to say that I'm very proud to be part of this organization and of a community that believes in neighbour helping neighbour.

EDUCATION REFORM

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): This past Tuesday evening a town hall meeting on Bill 160 was held at Lockerby Composite School. I want to thank David Chellow, the president of the parent advisory council of MacLeod Public School, for organizing the event which involved 10 south end Sudbury schools.

There was an excellent turnout and an excellent exchange of ideas, but in the end most of the people who were in attendance were still very concerned with Bill 160.

Pat Nurmi from my Sudbury office forwarded a petition to me signed by concerned residents from Sudbury and Sudbury East. In it, they expressed concern about the partnership between Mike Harris and the former NDP Minister of Education Dave Cooke. Certainly the feeling is that this alliance of educational philosophies between the Conservatives and the former NDP education minister equals bad education. Although this alliance in philosophy between Mike Harris and Dave Cooke may define EIC as the Education Improvement Commission, my constituents, and those of the Sudbury East riding, define EIC as education in crisis.

They ask that the government rescind Bill 160, dissolve the partnership between Mike Harris and the former NDP Minister of Education Dave Cooke.

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Len Wood (Cochrane North): I want to take this opportunity today to congratulate all those men and women who recently ran for office in municipal elections right across the province, in particular the riding of Cochrane North. The commitment, goodwill and dedication that will be demanded on the part of the newly elected mayors, reeves and councillors and school trustees will be enormous, given the scope and the magnitude of the change that is being forced on them by this Conservative government with the passing of Bill 152.

Communities in the north will be hit hard by the whole downloading exercise: provincial highways, social assistance, policing, public housing, ambulance service, day care, public health, policing costs and a number of other issues. Local governments are forced to make do with what is essentially a shell game.

With this in mind, I want to extend my congratulations to the following people: Donald Genier of Cochrane, Fred Poulin of Smooth Rock Falls, Roger Chevrier of Opasatika, Jean Claude Caron of Kapuskasing, Real Cousineau of Glackmeyer township, Claude D'Amours of Moonbeam, Paul Zorzetto in Mattice and Laurier Bourgeois in Val Rita. I know these men and women are going to work hard. They're committed to working to ensure that northern communities remain strong and vibrant communities despite the actions of the Conservative government.

As I pointed out, I'm meeting with the various reeves and mayors and town councillors. We know there's going to have to be money brought out because the downloading is not revenue-neutral. It never was intended to be revenue-neutral as far as I'm concerned. There are probably millions of dollars — \$25 million or more — owed to Cochrane North municipalities.

MARK MESSIER

Mr Ron Johnson (Brantford): I rise in the House today as a patriotic Canadian and native of Brantford, the home town of hockey great Wayne Gretzky, to draw attention to a grave and serious injustice.

Daily on the streets of my community, in its coffee shops, restaurants, barber shops, on the radio and in telephone calls to my constituency office, I hear the indignation, the sense of betrayal, shock and even outrage. I speak of something which I believe can have far-reaching and long-range implications on national unity, which could tear at the very fabric which holds our country together.

I speak of the very serious omission of a fellow patriotic Canadian from the Canadian Olympic hockey team, someone who has always answered the call of his country without hesitation, someone who has consistently exemplified the qualities of leadership and team building we try to instil in our young people.

I speak of the exclusion of a six-time Stanley Cup winner, two-time Hart Trophy winner for league MVP, Conn Smythe Trophy winner for playoff MVP, a four-time, first-team, all-star player with 1,272 regular season games, 575 goals, 1,552 points, 1,596 penalty minutes, 236 playoff games and 295 playoff points.

I speak of Mark Messier, a true Canadian. I urge all patriotic Canadians to contact the Canadian Hockey Association in Calgary at 1-888-846-4244 to voice their displeasure at this very serious injustice.

1340

NIAGARA ESCARPMENT COMMISSION

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): When the members of the opposition expressed grave concern about the appointment of Norman Seabrook to the Niagara Escarpment Commission, the Conservative members of the government agencies committee rallied to his side and voted unanimously to approve his appointment.

Even though Mr Seabrook was believed to have a rather negative approach to the preservation of escarpment lands at a time when this environmental gem, declared by the United Nations to be a world biosphere, would be under pressure from developers eager to develop the landscape, the Minister of Natural Resources accepted the recommendation of the Niagara Escarpment critic, Bill Murdoch, to appoint Mr Seabrook.

Mr Seabrook in one of the meetings made a racial allusion which is no longer, and never should have been, acceptable in our society and referred to the commission by using this terminology. What this points out is how important it is that the government assess very carefully its appointments to various agencies, boards and commissions. It simply isn't good enough to have the old boys' network, where a member of the Legislature who happens to dislike, for instance, the Niagara Escarpment Commission and the preservation of the Niagara Escarpment lands is allowed to influence the government to have one of his friends appointed to the commission.

Let us hope this is a lesson for the government. Let us hope that the minister will now appoint those who are going to truly protect the escarpment.

EDUCATION REFORM

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): I have read with interest in the Toronto Star this morning Mr Harris saying that he doesn't think the educational court challenge was "a productive use of time or money." Then he says, "It seems to be the way of the land these days that if you don't like anything that's done by a company or a municipality or a provincial or federal government, you hire lawyers and march off to court."

I say to the Premier that if he'd start listening to the people, bring democracy back to Ontario and stop breaking the law himself — his government has been caught on several occasions — then people wouldn't have to as a last resort go off to court. Where does the Premier get off telling people that he doesn't think going to court to fight against the unjust laws that are being made in this province against the will of the people is a productive thing to do?

On Saturday all kinds of people all over the province are finding ways to continue this battle over the demise of our public education system. On Saturday in my riding, from 11 o'clock to 3 o'clock, people will be gathering, parents and teachers and students, in my office at 288 Danforth to go door to door asking people to sign the petition to repeal this bill.

BLAKE MULLIN, DAVID STANLEY AND DONALD HILBORNE

Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): Tonight, two Oxford county volunteer firefighters will be honoured for their distinguished service as they are presented with the Ontario Medal for Firefighter Bravery. Princeton firefighters Blake Mullin and David Stanley will receive the honour along with three others from across Ontario.

These medals are given to individuals who show extreme bravery in the line of duty. Blake and Dave certainly displayed this extreme courage in November 1996, when they jumped into a liquid manure tank to rescue three farmers who had passed out due to the thick lethal gas fumes. The two firefighters, wearing air masks and air packs, went into the 12-foot tank to pull farmers out. They were assisted by other firefighters, who tied a rope around the waist of each of the men to help lower them into the tank and pull them out along with the three unconscious men.

This is indeed an act of bravery. Tonight in the Legislative Building the volunteers will receive this prestigious award from the Honourable Hilary Weston, the Lieutenant Governor of Ontario.

I would like to also bring the attention of the Legislature to the Oxford county —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Are we out of time? I think I made a mistake, member for Oxford, and

didn't set the clock. It was my fault. I cut you off. When I stood up, you were cut off the mike, so if you want to continue from where I cut you off.

Is there unanimous consent that he read it again? Agreed. Okay. One more time from the top.

Mr Hardeman: I'd also like to bring the attention of the Legislature to Oxford resident Donald Hilborne, who was honoured Wednesday for outstanding achievement with the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs in Woodstock. Donald was one of the recipients of this year's Amethyst Award. The Amethyst Award honours Ontario civil servants who are recognized for their excellence and outstanding achievement. He was honoured for his efforts in developing a computer program to help farmers reduce water pollution stemming from manure. We in Oxford are extremely proud of all three of these men and wish to congratulate them for their efforts.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): Point of privilege, Mr Speaker —

The Speaker: I should get those in advance.

Ms Churley: It's just unanimous consent to wear a button.

The Speaker: The member for Riverdale is requesting the wearing of a button for the women who were massacred. Agreed? Agreed.

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William): I believe there is unanimous consent of all the parties to mark the anniversary of the murder in Montreal of the 14 women.

The Speaker: Agreed? Agreed.

DAY OF REMEMBRANCE AND ACTION ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William): It is eight years now since the senseless, tragic killing of 14 bright young woman at l'École polytechnique in Montreal. Eight years later the horror of it is no less, and it should be no less. We cannot allow ourselves to forget the pain of the families or the incredible waste in the loss of these 14 lives. We cannot know for certain that these women were targeted for killing because they were pursuing a non-traditional field, although we believe that's so. We do know for certain that they were targeted for killing because they were women. We know for certain that the bright futures of these young women were suddenly erased by a senseless, mad act and that it was not an act of random violence; it was an act against women, carried out against them because they were women.

I try, as the parent of four daughters, to imagine the continued grieving of the families and the friends of Geneviève Bergeron, Hélène Colgan, Nathalie Croteau, Barbara Daigneault, Anne-Marie Edward, Maud Haviernick, Barbara Maria Klucznik, Maryse Laganière, Maryse Leclair, Anne-Marie Lemay, Sonia Pelletier, Michèle Richard, Annie St-Arneault and Annie Turcotte, and I cannot conceive of how their families and friends can cope with such a loss.

But my sense of the magnitude of what was lost eight years ago in such a sudden and horrific way increases my

awareness of the vulnerability of my own daughters and all young women like them, and that renews my own commitment to do whatever I can to ensure that women can be safe and free from fear. We have such a long way to go. We know that domestic violence is increasing, not decreasing, despite greater awareness that domestic violence is a crime and that the crime now carries a greater likelihood of conviction and harsher penalties. We are not yet doing nearly enough to ensure that women can be safe in their own homes and can escape violent situations when their safety is threatened.

We know little about the origins of the senseless acts of violence against women on our streets or in a Toronto subway station. It is not sufficient to say that these are the acts of sick minds. Of course they are. But what predisposes a twisted mind to direct its anger and its violence towards women? Why are we so reluctant to understand that the roots of this targeted violence lie in the persistence of the abuse of power where women and children are so often the victims? And why do we not understand that sexual harassment is not unrelated to the horrific acts of violence that have the power to shock us so much?

We must do more to make our homes, our schools, our streets and our subways physically safe places for women. I acknowledge the efforts that are being made to take back the night, but even beyond this, we must not stop short as a society in our readiness to be shocked by violence wherever we see it, in every way that it makes itself known, from the abuse of children to the verbal abuse and sexual harassment of women, and to say: "Stop. This is not tolerable and it will not be allowed to continue."

Only then will our remembering of the killing of 14 young women eight years ago become truly meaningful and only then will we be able to pull some kind of sense out of this senseless loss.

1350

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): Eight years ago, after this horrific crime was committed, Stevie Cameron, a journalist who I think is well known to everybody here, wrote a story for the *Globe and Mail* in sharp reaction to the event. I thought it would be useful today to read excerpts from that article, because you have to remember that it was written very, very soon after the murder of these eight young women.

"They are so precious to us, our daughters. When they are born, we see their futures as unlimited and as they grow and learn, we try so hard to protect them: This is how we cross the street, hold my hand, wear your boots, don't talk to strangers, run to the neighbours if a man tries to get you in his car.

"We tell our bright, shining girls that they can be anything: firefighters, doctors, policewomen, lawyers, scientists, soldiers, athletes, artists. What we don't tell them, yet, is how hard it will be. Maybe, we say to ourselves, by the time they're older it will be easier for them than it was for us.

"But as they grow and learn, with aching hearts we have to start dealing with their bewilderment about injustice. Why do the boys get the best gyms, the best equip-

ment and the best times on the field? Most of the school sports' budget? Why does football matter more than gymnastics? Why are most of the teachers women and most of the principals men? Why do the boys make more money at their part-time jobs than we do?

"And as they grow and learn we have to go on trying to protect them: We'll pick you up at the subway, we'll fetch you from the movie, stay with the group, make sure the parents drive you home from babysitting, don't walk across the park alone, lock the house if we're not there.

"It's not fair, they say. Boys can walk where they want, come in when they want, work where they want. Not really, we say; boys get attacked too. But boys are not targets for men the way girls are so girls have to be more careful.

"Sometimes our girls don't make it. Sometimes, despite our best efforts and all our love, they go on drugs, drop out, screw up. On the whole, however, our daughters turn into interesting, delightful people. They plan for college and university and with wonder and pride we see them competing with the boys for spaces in engineering schools, medical schools, law schools, business schools. For them we dream of Rhodes scholarships, Harvard graduate school, gold medals; sometimes, we even dare to say these words out loud and our daughters reward us with indulgent hugs. Our message is that anything is possible.

"We bite back the cautions that we feel we should give them; maybe by the time they've graduated, things will have changed, we say to ourselves....

"But we still warn them: park close to the movie, get a deadbolt for your apartment, check your windows, tell your roommates where you are. Call me. Call me.

"And then with aching hearts we take our precious daughters to lunch and listen to them talk about their friends: the one who was beaten by her boyfriend and then shunned by his friends when she asked for help from the dean, the one who was attacked in the parking lot, the one who gets obscene and threatening calls from a boy in her residence, the one who gets raped on a date, the one who was mocked by the male students in the public meeting.

"They tell us about the sexism they're discovering in the adult world at university. Women professors who can't get jobs, who can't get tenure. Male professors who cannot comprehend women's stony silence after sexist jokes. An administration that only pays lip-service to women's issues and refuses to accept the reality of physical danger to women on campus....

"What can we say to our bright and shining daughters? How can we tell them how much we hurt to see them developing the same scars we've carried? How much we wanted it to be different for them? It's all about power, we say to them. Sharing power is not easy for anyone and men do not find it easy to share among themselves, much less with a group of equally talented, able women. So men make all those stupid cracks about needing a sex change operation to get a job or a promotion and they wind up believing it....

"Now our daughters have been shocked to the core, as we all have, by the violence in Montreal. They hear the

women were separated from the men and meticulously slaughtered by a man who blamed his troubles on feminists. They ask themselves why nobody was able to help the terrified women, to somehow stop the hunter as he roamed the engineering building.

"So now our daughters are truly frightened and it makes their mothers furious that they are frightened. They survived all the childhood dangers, they were careful as we trained them to be, they worked hard. Anything was possible and our daughters proved it. And now they are more scared than they were when they were little girls.

"Fourteen of our bright and shining daughters won places in engineering schools, doing things we, their mothers, only dreamed of. That we lost them has broken our hearts; what is worse is that we are not surprised."

This was written, as I said, shortly after, in the aftermath of the horrifying shock for all of us to find out about the murder of these young women.

Every year I join with my colleagues from all three parties. We attend a candlelight vigil at Women's College Hospital. As I stand in the House every year, I talk about what a painful and sad time that is, but how important a ceremony it is, because every year 14 of us women are given a red rose to hold, and that rose is not just a rose. Each rose symbolizes a young woman who was gunned down that day in the university. As we stand there and slowly, one after the other, come forward and place the rose representing a name, a person, that person, to each of us, becomes very real.

Most of us, as mothers ourselves, come out of there with broken hearts because in that ceremony every year, as we to some extent relive it, these young women who were murdered become real to us. It's not just something that happened eight years ago. And we remember all of the other women who have died at the hands of their male partners and other forms of violence against women.

I think it's important that we take the time every year in this House to stand up and speak and remember the murder of these women, because we must never forget.

Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for women's issues): I rise with my colleagues today to recognize that December 6 is the national Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women. Today we remember the 14 bright young women, full of promise, whose lives were brutally cut short on December 6, 1989; whose lives were cut short because they were women and because they dared to walk a path that once had only been walked by men.

The female engineering students at l'École polytechnique represented hope for a profession that was opening its doors at that time to women in greater numbers. They stood as proof that entering a professional college is a matter of ability, not gender.

Today we remember the victims of the Montreal massacre. We mourn along with their families. Today we also commemorate the women who have died at the hands of their current or estranged partners.

We remember the thousands of Canadian women who right now, as we sit here in this Legislative Assembly, live under constant threat of physical, sexual and emotional abuse. They are our wives, our mothers, our grandmothers, our daughters, our aunts, our sisters, and we love them and we need to protect them as they nurture us.

Today we remember the victims and survivors of these crimes and we renew our commitment to end all forms of violence against women.

In the eight years since the Montreal massacre, too much attention has been paid to the person who did the killing. We look at news reports; we see his picture. We must stop it. We must stop mentioning the name and printing that picture. We must, however, remember what his motives were.

On this national Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women, let us resolve to focus on the 14 women who lost their lives. Let us remember their names, as their families are surely doing today, and let them live on as symbols of hope for the future.

1400

For every woman who graduates from a school of engineering — and there are many of them, but not enough — let us say, "This one is for you, Michèle Richard." For every woman who breaks through that glass ceiling and reaches her goal, let her say and let us say, "This one is for you, Annie Turcotte, Geneviève Bergeron or Hélène Colgan." And for each small victory in our own effort, for everyone here in this House who works in our communities to end that violence against women, let us say, "Sonia Pelletier, Nathalie Croteau, Barbara Daigneault, Anne-Marie Edward, Maryse Laganière, Annie St-Arneault, Maud Haviernick, Maryse Leclair, Anne-Marie Lemay, Barbara Maria Klucznik, this is for you."

On this national Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence against Women, let us recognize the right of every woman, of every person, to be safe in our communities, in our homes, at school, on the street. All of us must state our commitment. All of us in this House, in our country, across our provinces, our communities and in our homes must commit to provide those supports, each and every one of us, to those women who continue to experience this terrible violence.

Mr Speaker, I ask that we take a moment of silence to remember those victims and their names.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Please rise.

The House observed a moment's silence.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

MILK AMENDMENT ACT, 1997

LOI DE 1997 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LE LAIT

Mr Villeneuve moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 170, An Act to amend the Milk Act / Projet de loi 170, Loi modifiant la Loi sur le lait.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Hon Noble Villeneuve (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, minister responsible for francophone affairs): It's my pleasure to introduce a bill that will amend the Milk Act to allow the transfer of the raw milk quality program to the dairy farmers of Ontario. This legislation will ensure a continued supply of safe, high-quality dairy products to Ontario's consumers and increase efficiency in our raw milk inspection system.

HIGHWAY TRAFFIC AMENDMENT ACT (DRIVER TRAINING COURSE), 1997

LOI DE 1997 MODIFIANT LE CODE DE LA ROUTE (COURS DE CONDUITE AUTOMOBILE)

Mr Wettlaufer moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 171, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act to require applicants for a driver's licence to complete successfully a driver training course / Projet de loi 171, Loi modifiant le Code de la route pour exiger que l'auteur d'une demande d'un permis de conduire termine avec succès un cours de conduite automobile.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener): I'm pleased to move the bill. The bill amends the Highway Traffic Act to require that an applicant for a driver's licence must, not more than two years before making the application, have successfully completed a driver training course approved by the Minister of Transportation.

ORAL QUESTIONS

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): My question is to the Premier and it's on the new property tax plan that will begin in 27 days. It's increasingly evident that the Premier and the government have taken a good idea, property tax reform, and are completely screwing it up.

I use the clerks and treasurers themselves, the people who have to implement this, who have said that this plan is going to create chaos in the municipal sector. They have told us that you are putting at risk the financial health of our municipal sector. They went on to say that they expect 600,000 appeals in the province of Ontario, and they've told us that no municipality will be sending out its final tax bills until at least July, probably August, and as late as September.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Question, please.

Mr Phillips: My question is this: The last date for appeal of your taxes in 1998 is June 29. That is before the tax bills go out. Why are you having the appeal date —

The Speaker: Thank you, Premier?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I'm not sure where you get your dates from or your information from. I appreciate your comment that it's a good idea, and I'd be interested in your thoughts on, if it was such a good idea, why you didn't do it in the five years you were in government.

Mr Phillips: You probably aren't aware of the dates because they're in your own bills. The last date for appeal, Premier, is June 29.

I just say on behalf of the taxpayers of Ontario, Mike Harris is going to set for the business community over half their property taxes. That bill will not arrive at our businesses until July or August, but Mike Harris has told you that the last date you can appeal your 1998 property taxes is June 29. The Mike Harris property tax bill arrives in July and the last date for appeal is June 29.

I ask you again, Premier, why have you set this up so that the last date of appeal is June 29, before they even get their tax bills? Why would you not allow people in 1998 to appeal their taxes after they finally find out how much you're socking to them?

Hon Mr Harris: I think the information will be out long before that, as it always is. There will be the interim tax bills, there will be the assessment data and there will be the formulas there. I think people will know, as they always do. I don't know what nonsense you're spewing.

Mr Phillips: I just say to all of the property taxpayers, listen carefully to this, because the Premier obviously does not know what he's talking about. The last date for appeal is June 29. No one in this province will be getting their 1998 tax bill until July, August or September. No one will know, Premier, how much their taxes are for 1998 until July, August or September. That is fact.

If you want to contradict that, I challenge you to contradict that. I challenge you to say I'm wrong. The final tax bills will not go out until July; the final date for appeal is June 29. That is fact. Stand up today and say it is not.

Hon Mr Harris: You are saying that people will not know by the time for the final notice, and you are wrong.

CARDIAC SURGERY

Mr Gerard Kennedy (York South): My question is for the Minister of Health. You made an announcement the other day in Hamilton around funding to improve cardiac care in this province. It was a long-awaited announcement. We congratulate you for finally responding to capital needs to improve cardiac care.

Minister, you know that will take time. You know that the communities have to come up with 50% of the funding. Meanwhile, the main requirement to improve cardiac care in Ontario was missing from your announcement: operating funds to be able to increase the amount of procedures that are done in this province. A report that your ministry

has been sitting on since September said these were needed.

Today you can correct the oversight. Your ministry has cut millions of dollars from hospitals and has made it very hard for them to respond to what's predicted to be a 26% increase in demand. Will you increase operating funds so that the shiny new equipment can actually serve some people?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health): If you will recall, earlier this year we actually did announce an expansion of surgery capacity for the operating portion and we announced at that time \$35 million. As well, the Cardiac Care Network is continuing to work and they will be making further recommendations to us in the spring.

1410

Mr Kennedy: The minister needs to know that this is an urgent matter. This is something that needs to be dealt with. The previous minister knew about it, your ministry officials have known about it, you in your new capacity know about it as well: that there are delays in Ottawa, that some of the hospitals, like the one in Sault Ste Marie, are having to pay deficit funding to do the catheterizations, to do the tests.

The cardiologists in the Toronto area are so concerned they started their own waiting list. On that waiting list since May approximately six people have died and five have had a heart attack. Minister, you need to act very soon to make sure the operating dollars are there where they are needed in the province. You haven't provided those and you need to do that, because that waiting list has been getting longer and you know that many of the new labs, which we think are good things to have in place, are not going to be there for as much as six months or longer.

Today, tomorrow, Minister, you need to be acting. You need to be putting more operating funds so we can get them up to capacity as your expert panel told you to do. Will you act so that people can have access to those tests and better cardiac care in this province?

Hon Mrs Witmer: I am not sure whether you're aware of the fact, but since 1995 we have actually invested \$58 million in cardiac care. This government does recognize the need for new dollars to support these priority services in the area of cardiac care. In fact our announcement yesterday was extremely well-received, because what we have done is we have now provided additional support on top of the \$35 million we had already invested previously this year. We are making every attempt to move forward as quickly as we can to reduce the waiting list. I want to indicate to you that we know surgeries are up 13% over the same time last year, and we are starting to see a decrease and we will continue to move forward as we have in the past.

Mr Kennedy: Minister, you were told and your previous minister was told clearly that there is a crisis in access to advanced cardiovascular care — in September, after you made some of your catch-up announcements, long after you dealt with that. You are not even keeping track, your own Cardiac Care Network isn't even keeping track

of how many people are dying on a waiting list for those procedures.

You can shrug it off and say, "Even though our government has cut \$800 million from hospitals, we are not going to respond to this," but you are the Minister of Health. It is important that you tell the families and the community cardiologists out there that you will act immediately to improve the operating funds to make sure people can have access to those tests.

Minister, will you do that or will you just depend on the old ideas, the old vision and the money that has been taken away by the old Minister of Health, or will you provide us with some of the new answers we badly need for the Ontario health system today? Will you do that for the people in Ontario?

Hon Mrs Witmer: It's obvious the member opposite isn't aware of the tremendous progress that has been made, particularly this year. As I've indicated to you, we are moving forward. We invested this year \$35 million alone in operating funds. In fact, when the announcement was made, I just want to quote: "This is a giant step forward in the integration of medical services," said Dr Wilbert Keon, head of the University of Ottawa Heart Institute. Dr Bill Schragge said it will have a significant impact on waiting lists for cardiac surgery. Without it there would be major delays."

Of course, Dr David Naylor at the Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre, said when we made the \$35 million investment to reduce heart surgery waiting lists: "These funds will shrink the line to its shortest period ever. This is a very important, major step forward."

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Answer, please.

Hon Mrs Witmer: I would simply indicate to you, despite what you are saying, we have this year —

The Speaker: Thank you.

EDUCATION FINANCING

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): My question is to the Premier with respect to the education financing that will flow, particularly in the stub year. You know, of course, that the stub year for school board budgets begins four weeks from now. Your government has repeatedly stated that the new school boards, which also begin operation four weeks from now, will have stable funding. We want to understand more clearly and they need to understand more clearly what that means, because it's our understanding that for that stub year, that is, the first eight months of 1998, what you mean by that is that, in effect, boards will receive 62% of this year's combination of grants and taxes. Premier, can you confirm that the funding for the stub year is in fact going to translate into 62% of grant and tax revenue receipt by boards this year?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I'll refer it to the minister responsible.

Hon David Johnson (Minister of Education and Training): I will confirm precisely what the previous minister, Minister Snobelen, indicated in his April 18 letter to the school boards, where he said, "I'm pleased to

advise you that for the 1997-98 school year," — that is, ending August 1998, and that is the stub year, from January to August — "the government will continue to provide in grants and taxes the level of funding the system was receiving in 1997."

That is precisely what we're going to do. Over the course of this year we've been meeting with various business officials. Meetings have even been held as late as today; there's a meeting going on even with school board officials today, local officials having further input into this whole process. So they can be sure of that stable funding.

Mr Silipo: The reason I asked a very specific question about the 62% was because people know the answer the minister has just given is the answer that's being given to date. We're trying to get some clarification as to what that actually means for various school boards. We understand, through the Ontario Association of School Business Officials, that the ministry is planning to apply this factor of 62% to all boards equally.

We want to point out that there is a problem with that, and I'm sure you're aware of it, because as you know a survey that was conducted by that same association showed that some boards are spending more than 70% of their budgets in that same period of January to August. If you stay on that formula of 62%, then you're going to have, in the words of this report, winners and losers, because there is a range of spending in terms of how boards allocate their money.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Question, please.

Mr Silipo: One of the big areas for that is what school boards do with respect to their summer programs. Therefore, if you stick to the 62%, we're going to see summer programs closing as one of the likely outcomes. Are you going to allow some kind of range, or are you going to stick firmly to the —

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon David Johnson: I'm not here to make an announcement today with regard to the precise finite details of the plan, but suffice it to say that the grants and taxes have been committed to be stable. I am aware that some boards feel 62% is fine; some feel it should be 63%; some may feel that less than 62% may cover their costs during that period of time. It may be deemed to be the same amount of stable funding they received last year. All I can tell you is I'm aware of that, our officials are aware of that, we're meeting with various business officials, board officials — the meetings are taking place even today. The meetings are at the request of various officials. We're happy to do that and we're working out the finite details. They've been assured of stable funding. There's no problem in that regard.

Mr Silipo: You see, the problem is the minister keeps saying they are assured of that funding. He said the system-wide funding will be there. What we're trying to understand is, what does that mean board by board? I appreciate that meetings are happening at the 11th hour; I suppose that's better than having them start in January when the new budget year actually starts. But Minister, if

you don't have your act together by now, that's exactly why school boards are concerned about what this means for them.

Will you allow, in that formula, for those variations that will ensure things like summer programs don't have to be closed down as a way for school boards to meet an arbitrary figure that you might very well decide to come down to? You've had very good suggestions from the business officials who have told you, "If you want to start with a benchmark of 63%, then be prepared to adjust that up or down to deal with individual boards' spending." Are you prepared to do that? It's a very simple question.

Hon David Johnson: And it's a very simple answer: We have guaranteed stable funding, the same funding, grants and taxes that they received in 1997. That's precisely what the minister has indicated.

What happens and how those moneys are used will be at the discretion of the local boards. If they choose to spend their money in certain areas, then so be it. If they spend their moneys on certain summer programs or programs that take place during the rest of the year, that will be at their discretion.

1420

WOMEN'S SHELTERS

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): My question is to the Premier. Today on December 4, we are exactly 27 days away from the date your government is supposed to take over 100% funding of women's shelters. I've got to tell you, Premier, that not one single shelter — not one single shelter board, shelter program supervisor or executive director — knows what their funding for next year is going to be.

Your government announced that you would take 100% funding of women's shelters. The material from the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing showed the municipal portion of that funding to be \$5 million, but nowhere in your government's estimates does the \$5 million show up. It's not in the violence against women funding envelope; it's not in Comsoc estimates.

I've asked the minister responsible for women's issues repeatedly where the money is and she hasn't given me an answer, so I'm asking you today, Premier: Will you tell women's shelters what their funding will be for next year? They need to prepare their budgets now.

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I could refer you to any one of the ministers, all of whom could give you the answer, and rather than pick favourites I'll give you the answer myself. I think there will be an announcement forthcoming very shortly and it will be in plenty of time for preparing budgets. I would not anticipate any surprises and I think those involved in receiving the funding will be pleased.

Ms Churley: Premier, I'd like to see your Treasurer try to prepare your budget in 27 days. These people need to know what the money is going to be, and we on all sides of the House are aware that your government has botched, as the member for Oakville South has already

said, the download to municipalities. We know it's an uneven trade. Not only can you not tell the municipalities what the numbers are, you don't even know what the numbers are yourself.

I've got to tell you that people are very worried. You don't have a good record in this area. You've cut shelter funding each of the last two years, you've cut support to second-stage housing and you've cut every single support that women escaping violent domestic situations rely on — every single support, Premier: income support, housing support, child care, legal aid. Now we are in a situation where there are a lot of questions about funding. What will the funding be? How will it be calculated? What services will you fund? We need to know now.

Hon Mr Harris: I have to comment on some of the facts that are quite frankly not true. Child care: We've increased funding to record levels in Ontario. Legal aid: We have honoured and maintained exactly the agreement that was put in place by the Rae government — you will remember them — before us, so there have been no cuts to legal aid. We have honoured completely the agreement brought forward by your government.

I indicated to you there will be an announcement coming shortly. I indicated to you I don't think they'll have any difficulty in doing their budgeting for next year, and I add that this government is looking at correcting something we inherited from your government, which was a per diem funding that caused significant fluctuations and difficulties for shelters to budget properly. We are looking at providing a more stable funding formula for them so as not to have to put up with the discrepancies and difficulties we inherited from your government.

Ms Churley: Premier, you perhaps inadvertently just called me a liar and I'm going to turn it back on you, because what I said in my previous question was the truth. You have to accept the fact. You talk to your minister responsible for women's issues and find out, if you don't know, what is really going on there.

We are talking about shelters. Shelters save women's lives. All the pamphlets of one-time funding that the minister has been bragging about lately with the new strategy cannot save lives. We're talking about shelters here. They are critical, and we have not a word out of the minister or you today about funding for those shelters.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Question, please.

Ms Churley: What you just said is not good enough, Premier. I want you to stand up — if you can't do it, ask your minister to do it — and assure us today that that funding is there and that women will be told today what they can expect and where they expect to get —

The Speaker: Thank you very much.

Hon Mr Harris: I realize that the main question dealt with funding for shelters and I responded that they will have that information in plenty of time to budget. They will be pleased with that information. It will be more stable funding than the erratic type of funding on a per diem basis that you provided.

Having answered that, in placing your question before us some facts were incorrect. I thought I should correct the record and I did.

ILLEGAL TIRE DUMPS

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): My question is to the Premier. On December 2, there was a tire fire in Brantford where over 7,000 tires burned at a site that, as a result of your government's inadequate controls, lacked any regulations, lacked any aspect of government inspections and lacked any action on your part. This site had over 40,000 tires stored, eight MOE violations, operated without a licence and continued operation even with a court order to stop.

I have the field observation report from the ministry. The report says very clearly that even as late as October 15, "There is danger of fire. Contaminants will be discharged to the natural environment and will have an adverse effect." This is your own ministry's document on the site. It clearly shows that your government, your Ministry of the Environment does not have a handle on illegal tire dumps in Ontario, does not know how to deal with them and is going to cause another disaster in this province as a result of a lack of action.

Premier, I ask you, will you today commit your government to launch an immediate crackdown on all illegal tire dumps in Ontario and go after the operators who run them?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I think the idea the member puts forward is a pretty good one and I would be pleased to pass that on to the Ministry of the Environment. He will know that I and the minister share his concern with these kinds of fires.

I'm pleased to be able to report the immediate response of the Ministry of the Environment. Within an hour of the fire being reported to the spills action centre, the Ministry of the Environment was on the scene. I'm pleased to report that the local medical officer of health determined that there was no risk to human health.

I'm pleased to report that air samples were taken by the ministry that indicated that any chemicals, such as toluene, were below ministry guidelines, and that firewater — the experience we had from previous fires over the last decade in this type of situation, particularly the Hagersville fire — from this site was contained.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Answer, please.

Hon Mr Harris: In addition to that, you've suggested that we be proactive —

The Speaker: Thank you.

1430

Mr Agostino: This disaster could have been another major environmental and health disaster for Ontario. The problem is that your government, since taking office, has sent out a clear message to illegal tire dump operators in Ontario that it is okay to continue to work and operate illegally.

Premier, since you have taken office, charges against illegal tire dumps have dropped by 67%. Fines against

illegal tire dump operators have dropped by 79%. The message you are sending out is that it is okay. You talk the talk — the minister, Margaret Marland, talked the talk in 1990 with the Hagersville situation — but you have done nothing as a government to address that situation. There are hundreds of such sites across Ontario. It is a ticking time bomb that is going to explode unless your government commits to going after the operators, unless your government commits to change the regulations.

Premier, right now your ministry has admitted that they don't know where these sites are, that they don't know how many exist and don't know whether there are 4,000 or 400,000 tires stored at most of these sites. Without all the rhetoric, will you commit today to an immediate crackdown on all illegal tire dump operators in Ontario?

Hon Mr Harris: The member, I know, because he's interested in this issue, will know that the Ministry of the Environment encourages the reuse of used tires, recycling technologies, development of value added products. He will know that the province has achieved a 60% diversion for the management of scrap tires, a significant achievement in waste diversion. In fact, Ontario has led the way, with two tire recycling facilities in south-central Ontario.

With regard to this specific site, the ministry was brought in on August 25 by the city of Brantford. There was an inspection at that time. On September 3, 4, 5 and 24, inspectors were there on the property and orders were brought forward. I think the member would know that. In addition, in your first question you asked for an additional crackdown on the terrible mess we inherited. Could we do even more to clean it up faster? We'll do our best.

ACADEMIC TESTING

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): My question is to the Minister of Education. Mario Silva, a parent from Charles G. Fraser, called me a couple of days ago. He was very angry at the way the grade 3 tests had been reported. He said that the students who wrote the test got 80% in reading, 97% in writing and 93% in mathematics, but because those students who were exempt were included in the overall average, the school got a failing grade. He became very worried and was afraid that many of the parents would take their kids out of the school system.

Your answer to the member for Algoma yesterday was, "We understand," and you told him, "Be assured that I will bring this matter at the earliest opportunity to the attention of the EQAO and ask that they reconsider how they may publish this sort of information in the future."

Minister, they need an answer today. You've got the power to do that. Are you going to do it today or are you going to wait for the following year?

Hon David Johnson (Minister of Education and Training): I don't know what the member means precisely. I did have a discussion with one of the members of the EQAO yesterday and I'll be having another discussion with another member tomorrow.

The member and the individual he referred to can be assured that the results student by student are as accurate

as the test is, and the test, we have every reason to believe, is an accurate test. The only question is that some of those who were exempted were not included in the manner that most people think they should be in terms of the overall average per school.

But that isn't the main intent of the test. The main intent of the test is to give parents the opportunity to understand how their children are achieving, and that has been long overdue in the province. Parents have been asking for a standardized test to show how their child is achieving.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Answer, please.

Hon David Johnson: The kind of report cards and the kind of tests they've had in the past have been so fuzzy, they had no idea where they stood. Finally, we've come forward with a valid test —

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr Marchese: You're talking about the purpose of the tests and why we are doing them in the first place. That's not what I asked you. The question to you, Minister, is that Mario Silva, as a parent, was very worried that when you average in those students who were exempt, they got a failing grade. He knows that many of the students who wrote the test did very well. He knows that. He doesn't need you to tell him again. What he's worried about, and why the school principal, Maria Alviani, took measures to correct it, was the reason for her calling and writing a letter to all the parents saying: "These were the results. We're doing well. Those who were exempt, because they were added in, created a failing result. But we don't have a problem in our school. We have done very, very well." She is worried, and this parent is worried, that many of the parents might want to take their kids out of those schools where the grade is low.

The Speaker: Question, please.

Mr Marchese: Because you've got the power, we want you to reissue the real numbers of those students who have written the test. Will you do that now or are you going to leave it for —

The Speaker: Thank you. Minister.

Hon David Johnson: Just a couple of facts. The EQAO is an organization long overdue. In fact the previous government is the government that initiated the EQAO. They're doing excellent work. In this particular instance, the individual results of the individual students are entirely accurate. There is no problem.

In terms of results of schools, each school board has full authority to reissue the results within their board, and in any manner they see fit. If the board in question chooses to reorganize the data, pull out those who are exempt, reissue on a school-by-school basis, they have every right to do that, they have every authority to do that. They have every authority to communicate with their parents, pulling out those who are exempt and showing different averages.

I have brought this to the attention of representatives of the EQAO and I would expect in the future that in all likelihood their findings in the future will reflect that reality.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Mrs Brenda Elliott (Guelph): Today my question is for the minister responsible for women's issues. Today we've been reminded of the terrible consequences of violence against women. I'd like to draw your attention to the Agenda for Action, the framework for violence against women paper. In that, you indicated that money would be made available by our government to community groups across this province for local violence prevention efforts. I'm wondering what action we've taken in this regard, and if any of that funding has been distributed across Ontario.

Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for women's issues): As part of our work with the communities across this province, I should tell you that last week, as part of Wife Assault Prevention Month, we announced some \$660 million in community grants. I think the most important part of that is that some 50 organizations and groups across the province have received this money, and the more important part is that there are 180 partnerships. Otherwise, we're saying ending violence against women is everyone's responsibility.

I'm very proud to say that our communities are working very much more closely together. Groups such as the Chapeau Cree First Nation receive grants to establish a mentoring program between aboriginal women, the Association of the Deaf for Ontario to train service providers across the province on the needs of deaf women and children who have experienced violence, and the Centre des services communautaires de Vanier to help immigrant francophone women secure employment.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Answer, please.

Hon Mrs Cunningham: These are just some examples of the wonderful opportunities that have been made by —

The Speaker: Supplementary.

Mrs Elliott: I've been led to believe that this framework we've promoted as a government is in fact being used as a model for other provinces across Canada. I would like to know if that is the case and, if so, what other parts of that framework are we taking action on?

Hon Mrs Cunningham: I will answer that question to say that the ministers responsible for the status of women across Canada, provinces and territories, will be meeting in February to work very hard to establish this kind of framework across the country.

I would also like to make this point: We had a question earlier with regard to shelters. Right in this document, which all of us should be so proud of in Ontario because it builds on the work of the Liberal government and on the work of the NDP government — this isn't just us alone; we have taken it further — and it says, "In addition, the government has already announced that it will assume full funding for shelter per diems through the Ministry of Community and Social Services." It's in the book. It's our responsibility to spread the good word and to make people more confident that communities across this province and this country care about violence.

The Speaker: Answer, please.

Hon Mrs Cunningham: As we expand our victim assistance programs and as we expand our domestic courts and as we expand our programs in our hospitals to get good evidence —

The Speaker: New question, official opposition.

1440

ELEVATOR INSPECTIONS

Mr Mike Colle (Oakwood): I have a question to the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations: Minister, you'll be aware of the fact that provincial regulations require that elevators across this province undergo monthly maintenance inspections to make sure they're safe. Every day, hundreds of thousands of Ontarians count on the elevators that they use to be inspected and safe. Required monthly maintenance and safety inspections ensure that cables don't break and other core safety features are operating properly.

These maintenance and safety standards have been developed and are supported by the entire industry but it seems now, Mr Minister, you're planning to allow one elevator company, the biggest, that is, the Otis United Technologies, to dramatically cut back on elevator maintenance inspections to only twice-a-year inspections instead of the industry standard of monthly inspections, or 12 times per year. Why are you letting Otis off the hook?

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations): I think the member will know that very recently we embarked upon a self-management initiative called the Technical Safety Standards Authority. It's my information that what's happened since we've embarked upon self-management is that we've actually had a greater degree of enforcement of our laws. In fact, we found that almost all of them, whether it's TSSA or whether it's TICO or whether it's RECO, we found the degree of enforcement and the degree of investigations has increased.

Mr Colle: Mr Minister, the Canadian elevator contractors' association in a letter to you has warned you that, "You are going to compromise the safety of the elevator-using public." The letter goes on to say, and these are the elevator contractors, "The standards established five years ago, which are being adhered to by all but Otis and which are recognized by all but Otis as manager requirements, still need to be enforced today." Otis is getting provincial regulators' permission to cut costs and increase profits and basically not do the monthly inspections.

Hundreds of thousands of Ontarians in apartment buildings and commercial high-rise buildings require those elevators to be safe. You are putting these Ontarians at risk by letting Otis off the hook. Why won't you let Otis do what the other companies are doing, that is, inspect those elevators every month to make sure they're safe? Why are you cutting back on these safety and maintenance inspections? Lives are at risk here, Minister. Will you commit to saying you're going to let those monthly regulations continue and not let Otis get away with this?

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: I can only emphasize that one of the reasons why we went to this new format is we allowed the consumers to have a far greater role in terms of what's happening in enforcement of these areas.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order. Minister.

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: As I was saying, I think the important part of this initiative, if I could just give the context of this, is we have consumers heavily involved with the TSSA to ensure that public safety is not at risk, and I will assure you that public safety will not be at risk.

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs. Minister, as I'm sure you are painfully aware, a lot of Conservative supporters in the 905 area aren't particularly happy with you these days because you're making them share the costs of services that you're downloading on to the Toronto megacity. We've been hearing a lot of rumours that you may back down on pooling. Some of the 905 mayors are saying that you should cancel pooling and just simply give a temporary cash payment to the new megacity.

Minister, I just want to hear clearly from you today, are you planning any changes to the pooling that you announced with great fanfare back on August 6?

Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): Thank you to the member of the third party. The entire GTA is one economic entity, and I think everybody in this House recognizes that. If the regions that about the new city of Toronto benefit from that economic engine, we feel that they should also share in the social safety net. That's what this process is all about.

Many of the regions surrounding Toronto have very high education costs and very low social services costs. Without pooling, the regions around Toronto would have huge windfalls. The region of York would have had a windfall of \$100 million. We think those regions should share in the safety net of social services that are provided primarily in downtown Toronto. That's what this is all about. This is a fairness and equity situation, and I think everybody wants to be part of fairness.

Mr Silipo: I think I hear the minister saying that he's not going to change his position. I would like him just to be clear about that. That's what I heard him say.

Minister, we realize that you're somewhere between a rock and a hard place and that you caused this problem for yourself and your government by simply making your decision to download so many of these costs on to the property tax base when people are saying to you, both in the 905 area and in the megacity, that they don't want to be paying through property taxes for things like housing, welfare costs and child care. They're right. We shouldn't be paying out of those. But if you are going to push those things down on to the property base, then the notion of pooling makes some sense within that context.

Again, Minister, I want to be very clear that what you're saying is that in fact you are going to continue with your position of pooling the costs of those services across the whole GTA.

Hon Mr Leach: Is the member, a Toronto member, saying that he's opposed to pooling, that he wants the residents of Toronto to pick up the additional costs? We think it's fair. We think pooling across the entire GTA is an issue of fairness. I don't think anybody would disagree with that.

When he talks about unloading costs on to the property tax, we are taking 50% of education off the property tax. We're asking the municipalities to pay what they pay now: 20%. The province picks up 80% of the social services; they pick up 20%. We're taking 50% off of education. We're asking again that the pooling issue be looked at as a matter of fairness and equity. I'm sure that the vast majority in this House would agree with that and the vast majority of people in the province would agree with that.

1450

ONTARIO EXPORTS

Mr Douglas B. Ford (Etobicoke-Humber): My question is for the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism. Earlier this week I heard the head of CUPE, Sid Ryan, on the radio referring to small and medium business owners as being pompous and self-serving. Although I wasn't entirely surprised to hear Sid Ryan suggest such nonsense, nonsense which often found its way into the previous two government policies, I would like to ask the minister to tell me what he has done to ensure that small and medium-sized companies have an opportunity to enter new markets.

Hon Al Palladini (Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism): I want to thank the honourable member for Etobicoke-Humber for the question. Obviously, this government and my ministry are deeply involved in and committed to helping business succeed.

Small and medium-sized businesses are the key investors and job creators of Ontario. As a businessperson, I know that seizing opportunities in today's marketplace is not easy. Helping businesses prosper by broadening their horizons beyond our borders is one of my key priorities.

This week I had the pleasure of attending the Trade Winds Latin America Export Forum. The purpose of this forum is to bring together Ontario businesses that are interested in getting started or increasing their export base. The forum was sponsored by private sector companies and the Ontario International Trade Corp, chaired by my friend and my colleague Bill Saunderson.

Together the OITC and private sector experts can help businesses identify growth target markets, help tear down barriers —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Answer, please.

Hon Mr Palladini: — inform companies of better shipping methods or offer whatever expertise Ontario companies need to expand into an international —

The Speaker: Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr Ford: Small companies represent 98% of all Ontario businesses and 41% of private sector employment. Few people realize this.

Having been business owners, the minister and I know how tough it is to be competitive. The former two governments created an environment where business was unable to thrive in Ontario, much less internationally.

What is the minister going to do to repair the damage and open doors for Ontario businesses in the global market?

Hon Mr Palladini: While at the forum I was pleased to announce the establishment of the Export Marketing Task Force, to be led by the Premier, myself and Bill Saunderson and many prominent Ontario business leaders.

The export task force will work to develop a provincial export strategy over the next three months. This will form the basis for a series of initiatives which will address the challenges of developing Ontario's exports. We will launch an aggressive marketing campaign, domestic and international, to tell the world about Ontario firms, Ontario goods and services and Ontario technologies.

If we increased Ontario's share of the global export market by a half-point share, it would mean the creation of 165,000 new jobs. Trade equals jobs. It's that simple.

My thanks go out to the OITC, the private companies sponsoring the forum and especially to the 16 business people who will sit on the task force and help Ontarians to succeed not only in Ontario and Canada but on the world stage as well.

CHARITABLE GAMING

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a question for the Premier, who is preoccupied there. Your government has decided to embark upon a major escalation in gambling opportunities in communities across Ontario by establishing 44 new what you call charity casinos. These are not tourist casinos, these are charity casinos which are established in various communities.

They will have thousands of new video lottery terminals, or electronic slot machines, and other forms of gambling which will be available on a permanent basis, sometimes 24 hours a day, sometimes seven days a week in these communities. Most of the communities in Ontario, given the opportunity to vote on this in the recent municipal election, turned it down.

Premier, will you now assure the people of Ontario that in those communities which have by vote turned down charity casinos, you will not as a government establish charity casinos?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I think the minister can respond.

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations): We've been very clear all along that we would not force any community that did not want to have a charity gaming club to have a charity gaming club. We've also been very clear as well, whether it's plebiscites or referenda or the variety of questions that were asked during the last municipal election, that it was

information for the councils. The councils have the opportunity to speak to us. We are encouraging the councils to have a full discussion within their own communities, with their charities, with their BIAs, certainly with their ratepayers, to ensure that when they do make that decision, it's clearly reflective of their communities.

Mr Bradley: What the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations has said, then, is that despite what Mike Harris said about consulting the people on casinos in these communities, you are now going to ignore the plebiscite or referendum held in each community and that you are now going to go over the heads of those people and ask the councils of those communities to take whatever action they deem appropriate. You have offered bribes of \$1,500 per VLT to the community. You have tried to coerce them by getting the local charities to phone up and say, "If we don't take one in our community, we're not going to get any charity money."

You have put pressure on these municipal councils, and now you're going to ask these municipal councils to ignore what the people have said in a plebiscite and, regardless of what they said, impose it on a community. Will you now listen to the people in those communities who have voted and will you not impose on communities across Ontario these charity casinos, which will suck all the money out of those communities to the detriment of other businesses? Will you not allow local councils to overrule the people who have spoken by the ballot?

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: I don't propose to overrule councils. I don't propose to tell them how to find what their community wants. I've said clearly that plebiscites or the varieties of referenda that were held were really advice to the various communities, to the councils. Clearly the member doesn't understand the fact that this is intended to assist charities in their areas. Currently, through the three-day rovers, which his government introduced, which were totally unsupervised, charities provide about \$10 million to the people in the charities. This will increase it about \$180 million.

I remind the member that when the Bill 75 hearings were being held, he indicated that he was supportive of a venue that was permanent, supervised and monitored. If he wants to draw his attention back to Hansard on October 22, 1996, he'll find a very interesting quote.

TVONTARIO

Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East): I have a question for the minister of privatization. On Monday, November 24, your community forum panel on TVO was in Sudbury, and there were some very serious problems associated with that meeting.

First, the local newspaper ads announcing the event told people that if they wanted to register, they had to contact your number in Toronto to do so. But when people called, they got a voice mail message with no information about the meeting, how to register or where it was going to be located.

Second, the meeting was significantly delayed because a number of people, to their credit, decided they weren't going to answer the set questions that your panel had put out for them and instead insisted on giving their views about how important TVO is.

Third, despite repeated requests at the meeting for the report to go back to these people before it was released to you, your panel would not consent to do that. It was the TVO Matters Coalition that finally decided they would try to distribute that report to their members.

This whole process is a sham. It's designed to keep people out and to hide your agenda on privatization. How can you possibly justify this process?

Hon Rob Sampson (Minister without Portfolio [Privatization]): Indeed, there was a consultation meeting in Sudbury that was pre-arranged and run by a group of individuals we had asked to consult with Ontarians in Sudbury and other parts of Ontario as well. The process they came forward with in order to achieve the consultation was somewhat different from what other consultation processes had been, but it was designed that way to make sure the people who came forward had a chance to speak in smaller groups and smaller meetings so that their views could be heard.

Indeed, the meeting was set in Sudbury and there were a number of people who came forward and expressed their views on TVO. That's why we had the meeting: so we could hear what they felt was important about TVO, how they felt it was being used by themselves and what they would like to see going forward. That's why we set up the consultation: so we could hear those views.

1500

Ms Martel: I don't think you understand the seriousness of the problems in Sudbury. My colleague from Nickel Belt and I were at the hotel before the meeting started, and we know, because we were told by two different people, that when people called to ask where the meeting was taking place in the hotel, they were told by the hotel that no such meeting was taking place that evening.

Secondly, one individual, Sarah Walker, was told to call your 1-888 number for more information. When she did, of course, she got no information on the voice mail. When she finally got a live body after pressing zero, she was given no information about the meeting. She called the hotel back and was told that your staff had directed the hotel not to release any information about the meeting that night. When my colleague from Nickel Belt spoke with the hotel staff that night, he was also told by the hotel staff that they had been instructed not to give the public any information about the meeting that night.

Minister, how do you justify such behaviour? How do you justify trying to keep the public out with respect to this very important issue?

Hon Mr Sampson: Again, as I said earlier, we established the meeting in Sudbury so people could give us their views. A number of people from Sudbury did come to the meeting. Through the hotel accommodation, we decided to expand the meeting accommodation so that it could handle

the number of people who did show up. While there may have been some miscommunication as to which meeting room was being used in the hotel on the particular day, it's very clear that the people who showed up were given the opportunity to express their views. Those who didn't show up have in fact either written to the committee itself or to the secretariat to tell us what they see as important in TVO. As I said to you earlier, it's important that we hear these views from the people of Sudbury and other parts of Ontario so that when we make the decision on TVO, it can be based upon their input.

INTERMITTENT SENTENCING

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): My question is to the Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services, and it concerns criminals who go into the provincial jails to serve their sentences on weekends only. My constituents are concerned because of these weekend sentences, and they want the government to be tough on crime, not to be letting people roam freely all week when they should be behind bars. What is the advantage of continuing to put people in jail only on the weekends when the people of Ontario think they should be dealt with much more severely?

Hon Robert W. Runciman (Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services): I thank the member for Peterborough for the question, and I want to stress that intermittent or weekend sentences, as he described them, are provided for by the federal Criminal Code. This government certainly agrees with the majority of Ontarians who told us they want the justice system to better protect the public and punish the guilty and deter crime.

In response specifically to the question about intermittent sentences, I'm told through ministry officials that they cannot identify any advantage or any benefit to the system in terms of intermittent sentencing. In fact, a recent meeting of senior corrections officials from across the country called for the elimination of intermittent sentencing altogether. It continues to create problems in the system. Smuggling of contraband is one of the major problems resulting from intermittent sentences.

Mr Stewart: Minister, it seems that not only are these weekend sentences not what the public wants, but they also are not working. It seems that this weekend prisoners' program is creating more trouble than it's worth. The minister also indicates that this is a federal responsibility under the Criminal Code. In that case, what is the government of Ontario doing to have this changed?

Hon Mr Runciman: Simply put, the government believes that if someone commits a serious crime, they should do some serious time, and in many cases the serving of a sentence on weekends is truly a travesty of justice. That's why Ontario is taking this issue very seriously and is taking the position the federal government should remove intermittent sentences as an option, period.

Both myself and the Attorney General will be raising this issue tomorrow in Montreal at a conference of federal and provincial justice ministers. We're continuing to

pursue this, I can assure the member and other Ontarians who are concerned about this particular issue.

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): My question is for the Premier, but I don't see him here. Let me ask the question to the Minister of Municipal Affairs. There's a media report today where Roger Anderson, who is the new elected chair of Durham, reported yesterday at his inaugural meeting of the Durham regional council that he had been personally promised and guaranteed by the Premier that provincial downloading won't result in any property tax increase.

This has happened a number of times. You've said at AMO on a number of occasions that as a result of the shifting in responsibilities in the downloading, there won't be any tax increases. Minister, I'll ask you the same question I asked the Premier last week. There's an awful lot of consternation out there by municipalities and their taxpayers as to whether or not their taxes will increase. Will you give them a guarantee in writing — write them a letter, in other words — telling them that if there is a shortfall between what you're saying is going to happen and what may actually happen, if there's a shortfall in revenues, that you'll make it up to them? Will you give them that guarantee in writing?

Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I will repeat what I have said on many occasions in this House: that the transfers that were included in the Who Does What program are revenue-neutral and that no municipality in the province of Ontario should have to increase taxes as a result of that program. That is what the Premier of this province has stated. We have said that publicly at AMO meetings. I said it to the counties and wardens. It's out publicly in all of the media.

I'm sure that the new regional chair in Durham — and I congratulate him on his victory yesterday. I'm looking forward to meeting with him, where again I will be able to confirm to him face to face — I would be pleased to meet with the regional chairman face to face and reassure him that the Who Does What program will be revenue-neutral. I will be quite prepared to do that.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon Chris Hodgson (Deputy House Leader): I have the weekly business statement. Pursuant to standing order 55, I wish to indicate the business of the House for the week of December 8, 1997.

On Monday, December 8, in the afternoon, Bill 164, the Tax Credits to Create Jobs Act, second reading. In the evening, it'll be Bill 139, the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act, second reading, and Bill 120, the Red Tape Reduction Act, second reading.

On Tuesday afternoon, it'll be concurrences. In the evening it'll be Bill 164, the Tax Credits to Create Jobs Act, second reading.

On Wednesday afternoon, Bill 164, Tax Credits to Create Jobs Act, second reading. In the evening, we hope to deal with the Milk Amendment Act which has been introduced today.

On Thursday, December 11, 1997, private members' public business, ballot items 3 and 4 in the morning. In the afternoon, it'll be Bill 164, the Tax Credits to Create Jobs Act, second reading. In the evening, Bill 120, Red Tape Reduction Act, second reading.

PETITIONS

EDUCATION FINANCING

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew North): I'm pleased to present a petition signed by hundreds of secondary school students in the Barry's Bay area of west Renfrew county, which petition reads in part:

"We, the undersigned students, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario about our strong objections to Bill 160. Our objections focus on giving government too much centralized control over education."

These students are furthermore concerned about the government plan to reduce up to \$1 billion of public funding from public education. I'm pleased to present and support this petition on their behalf.

1510

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I have a petition forwarded to me by CUPE, CAW and the United Steelworkers of America. The petition reads:

"Whereas approximately 300 workers are killed on the job each year and 400,000 suffer work-related injuries and illnesses; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario continues to allow a massive erosion of WCB prevention funding; and

"Whereas Ontario workers are fearful that the government of Ontario, through its recent initiatives, is threatening to dismantle workers' clinics and the Workers' Health and Safety Centre; and

"Whereas the workers' clinics and the Workers' Health and Safety Centre have consistently provided a meaningful role for labour within the health and safety prevention system; and

"Whereas the workers' clinics and the Workers' Health and Safety Centre have proven to be the most cost-effective prevention organizations funded by the WCB;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately cease the assault on the workers' clinics and the Workers' Health and Safety Centre; and

"Further we, the undersigned, call upon the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to ensure that the workers' clinics and the Workers' Health and Safety Centre remain labour-driven organizations with full and equitable WCB

funding and that the WCB provide adequate prevention funding to eliminate workplace illness and injury."

On behalf of my NDP colleagues, I proudly add my name to theirs.

EDUCATION REFORM

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): I'm pleased to present a petition, although it's not in the proper format. It's addressed as a letter and it's from a couple of hundred students from St Stephen's Secondary School in Bowmanville.

"The students signed hereafter of St Stephen's Secondary School in Bowmanville fully support all our teachers. We feel that the changes to the education system proposed in Bill 160 deny teachers their right and in the long run the bill will not benefit students. Revisions to Bill 160 are absolutely necessary before it becomes law in order to ensure quality education for all students."

I'm pleased to support, in my view, the students' concern for education and present this petition to the House today.

ABORTION

Mr Peter North (Elgin): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Ontario health system is overburdened and unnecessary spending must be cut; and

"Whereas pregnancy is not a disease, injury or illness and abortions are not therapeutic procedures; and

"Whereas the vast majority of abortions are done for reasons of convenience or finance; and

"Whereas the province has exclusive authority to determine what service will be insured; and

"Whereas the Canada Health Act does not require funding for elective procedures; and

"Whereas there is mounting evidence that abortion is in fact hazardous to women's health; and

"Whereas Ontario taxpayers funded over 45,000 abortions in 1993 at an estimated cost of \$25 million;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario to cease from providing any taxpayers' dollars for the performance of abortions."

EDUCATION REFORM

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads:

"Whereas the partners in education continue to be fearful of Bill 160;

"Whereas we believe Mike Harris is not acting in the best interests of the students of Ontario;

"Whereas Mike Harris has forged a partnership with the former NDP education minister, Dave Cooke, to form the EIC;

"Whereas because of this alliance in philosophies between Mike Harris and Dave Cooke we, the partners in education, define EIC to be 'education in crisis';

"Whereas we believe that Mike Harris plus Dave Cooke equals bad education;

"Therefore, be it resolved that we petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to do the following in order to save public education:

"(1) Rescind Bill 160;

"(2) Dissolve the partnership between Mike Harris and the former NDP Minister of Education, Dave Cooke;

"(3) Disband the EIC, defined by Mike Harris and Dave Cooke to mean 'Education Improvement Commission,' when in reality it means 'education in crisis'; and

"(4) Reinvest in education, which is the future of Ontario."

I happily present this on behalf of the residents of Sudbury and Sudbury East.

FIRE IN HAMILTON

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I have a petition to the Honourable Minister of the Environment and Energy, Norm Sterling, and the Premier of Ontario:

"Whereas a fire at a PVC plastic vinyl plant located in the middle of one of Hamilton's residential areas burned for three days; and

"Whereas the city of Hamilton declared a state of emergency and called for a limited voluntary evacuation of several blocks around the site; and

"Whereas the burning of PVC results in the formation and release of toxic substances such as dioxins, as well as large quantities of heavy metals and other dangerous chemicals;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to hold a full public inquiry on the Hamilton Plastimet fire."

I continue to support these citizens in their call for a public inquiry, and add my name to theirs.

CERTIFIED GENERAL ACCOUNTANTS

Mrs Lillian Ross (Hamilton West): I have a petition signed by over 500 people and I'd like to read it in part since it's quite lengthy:

"Whereas it is in the best interests of the public to have open market competition among professional accountants; and

"Whereas, under the Public Accountancy Act, only chartered accountants have full access to public accounting licences in the province of Ontario; and

"Whereas the province of Ontario restricts certified general accountants more than any other province, with the exception of Prince Edward Island; and

"Whereas this has created a monopoly in the province of Ontario since 1962 that is not only unfair to the public but also results in additional expenses, particularly to small business owners;

"We, the undersigned residents of the province of Ontario, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to grant the Certified General Accountants Association of

Ontario their request for overdue amendments to the Public Accountancy Act to allow certified general accountants full access to public practice licences and to eliminate the present monopoly."

I have signed my name to this petition.

RÉFORME DU SYSTÈME D'ÉDUCATION

M. Jean-Marc Lalonde (Prescott et Russell) : J'ai ici une pétition qui contient plus de 2000 noms.

«À l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario :

«Attendu que nous, les signataires de cette pétition, voulons signifier au gouvernement notre opposition au projet de loi 160 ;

«Attendu que le projet de loi 160 exclut les parents et les enseignants du processus de décision dans le secteur de l'éducation en Ontario ;

«Attendu que le projet de loi 160 centralise tous les pouvoirs entre les mains du gouvernement ;

«Attendu que le projet de loi 160 accorde au gouvernement Harris le pouvoir de retrancher 660 \$ millions de plus du secteur de l'éducation ;

«Nous, les soussignataires, demandons le retrait du projet de loi 160.»

J'y ajoute ma signature. Merci.

EDUCATION REFORM

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I continue to receive petitions against Bill 160 and I intend to continue presenting them to the House because this issue is not over.

"We, the undersigned citizens of Ontario, ask you, Mr Dave Johnson, Minister of Education, to withdraw Bill 160 on the grounds that it is flawed legislation that will (a) allow uncertified teachers to teach in the classroom; (b) cause a loss to kids of thousands of teachers and increase class sizes; (c) reduce teacher preparation time, which translates into less teachers and less time for students; and (d) allow the provincial government to set the education tax rate without provision for debate in the Legislature or at the local school board level."

I continue to support these petitioners.

Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East): I'm pleased to introduce what is only the second petition I've ever received. On behalf of the Guildwood advisory council, another parent council doing excellent work on behalf of the kids in the Guildwood school, it's a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly. Pursuant to rule 36(b), I'll paraphrase and say that it deals with the importance of children receiving the right to the best-quality education, the importance of maintaining an education system which addresses local needs, the importance of having an education system that's dependent on the active involvement of parents, educators and the general public, and they call upon the Legislative Assembly to ensure that administrative savings are applied appropriately back to the school system.

I'm pleased to introduce this petition and have it form part of the record of the Legislative Assembly.

EDUCATION FINANCING

Mr Alex Cullen (Ottawa West): I've submitted so far in the few months I've been here some hundreds of petitions with respect to education. This is another one.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas education is our future; and

"Whereas students and teachers will not allow their futures to be sacrificed for tax cuts; and

"Whereas students, parents and teachers will not allow the government to bankrupt Ontario's education system; and

"Whereas you cannot improve achievement by lowering standards; and

"Whereas students, parents and teachers want reinvestment in education rather than a reduction in funding; and

"Whereas students, parents and teachers won't back down;

"Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly to withdraw Bill 160 immediately; and

"Therefore, be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario instruct the Minister of Education and Training to do his homework and be a cooperative learner rather than imposing his solution which won't work for the students, parents and teachers of Ontario."

I affix my signature to this petition.

1520

EDUCATION REFORM

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): I have a petition signed by hundreds and hundreds of people.

"Whereas the government of Ontario has not listened to the public on Bill 160; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario has chosen to overtly deceive the people of Ontario as to the true objectives of Bill 160; and

"Whereas we, the people, believe that no government has a mandate to act in isolation of the wishes of the electorate of this province and we have lost confidence in this government,

"We, the undersigned electors of Ontario, petition the Lieutenant Governor to dissolve the Legislature and call a general election forthwith."

I endorse this. I give it to page Rob Brown from St Pat's school in Perth county to deliver it to the Clerk.

CERTIFIED GENERAL ACCOUNTANTS

Mr Carl DeFaria (Mississauga East): I have a petition signed by approximately 2,000 people which reads as follows:

"Whereas, under the Public Accountancy Act, only chartered accountants have full access to public accounting licences in the province of Ontario; and

"Whereas certified general accountants have a statutory right to practise public accounting in the provinces of Alberta, British Columbia, New Brunswick and Newfoundland, are free to practise in the provinces of Saskatchewan and Manitoba, can be licensed to practise in Nova Scotia and have considerable public accountancy rights in the province of Quebec; and

"We, the undersigned residents of the province of Ontario, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to grant the Certified General Accountants Association of Ontario their request for overdue amendments to the Public Accountancy Act to allow certified general accountants full access to public practice licences and to eliminate the present monopoly."

EDUCATION REFORM

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): I have a petition here which is addressed to the government of Ontario.

"Whereas the government of Ontario has determined to pass Bill 160 without meaningful consultation with parents, teachers and other stakeholders; and

"Whereas a properly funded quality education system is critical to the developing of the children of this province and to the future of the province itself;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly hold a province-wide referendum on the question of whether Bill 160, the Education Quality Improvement Act, 1997, should be withdrawn or, if enacted, whether Bill 160 should be repealed."

It has been signed by about 400 or 500 Kingstonians, and I have affixed my signature to it as well.

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): "We, the undersigned students, are appealing to the provincial government of Ontario.

"We are signing this petition in protest of the current cuts to the education system. We are concerned that the educational reforms that are being made, the money that's being stolen from the system by Mike Harris and his gang at Queen's Park and Bill 160 are a betrayal of public education here in the province of Ontario.

"In signing this petition we hope that the government will realize that so-called reforms that are being made will only destroy public education in the province of Ontario and the growth and maturation of students in this province who deserve far better."

This petition is put forward by the students of Westminster Secondary School in London, Ontario. In signing this petition, the students of Westminster Secondary School understand that the issue they are addressing is one of ultimate importance not only to themselves but to their children and grandchildren after them.

I sign that in endorsement, as does Marion Boyd, MPP, from London.

COURT DECISION

Mr Bob Wood (London South): I have a petition signed by 49 people.

"Whereas the courts have ruled that women have the lawful right to go topless in public; and

"Whereas the Liberal government of Canada has the power to change the Criminal Code to reinstate such public nudity as an offence;

"We, the undersigned, respectfully petition the government of Ontario to pass a bill empowering municipalities to enact bylaws governing dress code and to continue to urge the government of Canada to pass legislation to reinstate such partial nudity as an offence."

ORDERS OF THE DAY

DEVELOPMENT CHARGES ACT, 1997

LOI DE 1997 SUR LES REDEVANCES D'AMÉNAGEMENT

Resuming the adjourned debate on the motion for third reading of Bill 98, An Act to promote job creation and increased municipal accountability while providing for the recovery of development costs related to new growth / *Projet de loi 98, Loi visant à promouvoir la création d'emplois et à accroître la responsabilité des municipalités tout en prévoyant le recouvrement des coûts d'aménagement liés à la croissance.*

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): It is my privilege to pick up where we left off the other night on the discussion of Bill 98. Bill 98 was introduced back in November 1996. Here it is November 1997 and the bill, An Act to promote job creation and increased municipal accountability while providing for the recovery of development costs related to new growth, is in third reading. Clearly the members here today have heard many of the sensitive issues with respect to this. If you think that now it's December and it's over a year, then we have to get on with doing the business.

The long-standing understanding with the development charge since it came in around 1990-91 is that growth should pay for growth. Indeed, our minister has consulted very broadly with all groups, whether it's the building trades groups or the municipalities, and in fact the new home sales people as well have been involved. Ultimately there's only one customer. The person who buys the house pays for these costs.

For those interested, I will review some of the highlights of the legislation. Under the revised Development Charges Act, new neighbourhoods will still contain all the services and features that new home buyers have grown to expect. Development charges will still help to fund roads,

water, sewer and other facilities including libraries. Development charges will no longer fund facilities such as museums, art centres or new city halls.

The residents of the entire community can decide over time whether they can afford these facilities when and where they want them. A contribution from municipalities towards the cost of those facilities is believed to be the best way of being accountable to the taxpayer. Community growth must be financed in a way that is fair to all citizens, both existing citizens and citizens who are new to the community.

The new development charge clearly is more balanced. It also gives municipalities the assurance that key services and infrastructure needed for growth will still be funded through development charges rather than through increased taxes from existing residents, many of whom, I might add, are seniors.

We've consulted exclusively and extensively on revisions and amendments to the act. We have spoken with municipalities, home builders and the development industry. Development needs to be encouraged. It creates jobs and economic vitality in municipalities. In fact, it's one of the largest job creators in our economy. And after all, it's good for Ontario. It just makes good sense.

Our government is doing what it can to make housing more affordable to new home buyers. The new development charge process is streamlined and removes much of the red tape and reduces costs for the municipality, the development industry and indeed the new home buyer. We are encouraged in an ongoing discussion with members of the municipal sector and the development industry in the development of this legislation.

I've also been in touch with the municipal leaders in the region of Durham, where I have been on municipal council. In fact I was on council when the existing development charges bylaw was brought forward by the Liberal government of the day. After much of the consultation — I'm just going to read from some of the endorsements here from, for instance, the GTA mayors and regional chairs as well as the Urban Development Institute.

"To come this far and have things fail was unacceptable." They were committed to working harder to solve many of the top issues. Their concluding remark, if I could quote Mayor Hazel McCallion, Mayor Ann Mulvale and Mayor Don Cousens as well as others — I'm sure most of the GTA mayors were involved — "We feel very good about this. We wish to move on now to other issues facing the GTA." Clearly they want us to pass and get on with this legislation.

I could also report here that there was one specific area where the municipality was going to have to pay for the soft charges or soft costs that are referred to, and there were discussions which moved to a model where a shared formula was arranged. This is a comment made by Mayor Hazel McCallion. "The new rates of reduction will be set at 10%. This," according to Mayor McCallion, "will allow for a more planned approach to the staging of the community facilities."

Once again, when you're looking at building an arena, should the new home buyer be the only contributor to building the new arena? Is the level of service being enhanced by the development charges? Those issues have been a central part of the discussion, and I believe the minister has listened and very clearly thinks we have a balanced, conclusive piece of legislation that will indeed serve all Ontario.

1530

I'll quote directly from the Minister of Municipal Affairs, Al Leach, the owner of this legislation: "The new Development Charges Act will restore balance to the system. It addresses the concerns of the development industry and gives assurance to municipalities that key services and infrastructure will still be funded through development charges. It would make new homes more affordable, create growth in jobs and promote industrial expansion."

There are a number of interesting details within the bill that, for me, as a person somewhat familiar with municipal issues, I know to be completely of interest to the average taxpayer really.

You might find out, how does this whole process get started? Once this legislation is started in January 1998, each municipality will have to go through a process, and it's in the legislation. That particular regulatory section is set out in section 10, the process for passing municipal bylaws:

"(1) Before passing a development charge bylaw, the council shall complete a development charge background study," of course defining very clearly what their capital cost needs are over a period of time, five to 10 years. Then they will do the following:

"(2) The development charge background study shall include" the estimates, the calculations for service and the examination of capital and other costs, and those studies will be brought forward.

It says here — this is section 12 now:

"(1) Before passing a development charge bylaw, the council shall,

"(a) hold at least one public meeting;

"(b) give at least 20 days' notice of the meeting" in a manner that's usually used for passing bylaws.

"(2) Any person who attends a meeting under this section may make representations relating to the proposed bylaw."

So clearly the public input is there at the municipal level to review the level of service and to understand that, so there's no change particularly in the process, except it's very clear that if it had been omitted from this legislation, it would have been a problem.

I bring to mind as well that there is an appeal process, as always, and this again is defined in this new Bill 98. When a bylaw that's passed is under challenge by some groups, there are up to 40 days to appeal the bylaw, and again that's appropriate, for public input. That's the way this government continues to pass most of the legislation, listening very closely to the public and bringing forward

amendments that address the areas that need to be changed.

My last concluding remark, if I may: Municipalities will be required to reduce the amount they recover from development charges by 10%. That 10% is dealing with soft services such as libraries and parkland for development. That's been a controversial section of the bill.

The next thing is that there's supposed to be a 10-year rolling average of the level of service that's being provided in calculating this development charge formula. That is to say, this isn't a chance to ramp up the level of service and then have it all borne by the new home purchaser. I think that's a fair and reasonable thing to expect, that new home buyers not have to shoulder the cost of increased levels of service.

As I'm nearing the end of my time here, I understand that members from the other party will make comments on this important legislation, Bill 98. I would draw to the members' attention that the bill has had wide discussion for well over a year.

Certainly as a municipal person, Mr Gerretsen from Kingston and The Islands would know where we started in 1990. I can tell you, in summary, that in Durham region the new home buyer is paying, on a single detached home, \$7,308 regional, \$5,131 local and \$629 for the municipal utility, for a development charge of \$13,068. That's the cost in Durham on a new home. It ranges across the province in the order of \$10,000 to \$20,000. Who is paying for it? It's the new home buyer. In fact, if you put it on the mortgage and put that mortgage over 25, 30 or 40 years, you're going to say that this \$10,000 or \$20,000 ended up costing that new home buyer an inordinate amount of money, perhaps hundreds of thousands of dollars.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Thank you. The member's time has expired. Questions and comments?

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): What the member forgets to talk about is that either the developer pays for it, and indirectly the new homeowner, or the taxpayer at large pays for it. It's got to be one or the other. These aren't things that simply don't exist.

What's very interesting about this whole Development Charges Act controversy is this: The province, earlier this week, just downloaded a whole bunch of responsibilities upon local governments, basically saying to local governments, "You're going to be responsible for more welfare costs, more public health costs, ambulance costs, transit costs, social housing costs and a whole variety of areas."

One of the things the minister has been saying is, "We have left more taxing room for the municipalities." One of the ways in which municipalities tax is in effect a tax on new development. When a new development starts, there are charges to that development. Why shouldn't the new homeowner pay for that? Why shouldn't the developer pay for that? Why should taxpayers as a whole be paying for that?

What they have really done is they are telling municipalities, "You cannot charge for certain things." Whereas on the one hand they seem to be giving municipalities

much more responsibility and many more services that they're going to have to look after, on the other hand they are lessening their ability to tax and to charge for reasonable development charges. In other words, the municipalities are getting squeezed.

The other thing I very quickly wanted to say is that I think it's very interesting that those areas that have the highest development charges also happen to be the fastest-growing areas. So I don't think there's any correlation between the amount of development that takes place in a particular area and the development charges that are actually being charged by that municipality.

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): You could take a short drive just north of Metro, east of Metro or west of Metro and you would see example after example of what has happened as a result of the growth in those areas, the burgeoning growth that has taken place over the last 10 or 15 years, and the fact that many services have quite frankly not been properly planned and have not kept up with that growth, whether it's in terms of schools that are overcrowded, lots of portables right next to really new schools, or whether we're talking about lots of other services that simply are not there to the level they need to be.

One of the answers that's been developed over the last number of years is the use of development charges as a way to help meet some of those costs. What this government is trying to do through this bill, even though they've tempered and lowered the impact that will result, is to try and shift that cost back down to the property tax base. It's going to mean that it's going to cause, I suppose, a slow-down in development. Maybe the Tories think that's a good thing. I haven't heard many people out there say that what they want to do is to slow down the growth of the areas. What I've been hearing and what people have been saying to us is that they want the growth to continue but they want it to be well planned. They want it to be in a way that ensures that the various services such as libraries, schools, community centres and other services that are needed are there and are going to be properly paid for.

One of the big questions that I think we will not know the answer to is, as the government shifts, in this bill, the responsibility more and more away from development charges to pick up those costs and pushes that down on to the property tax base, what will the impact be not only on the growth but on those services? Municipalities can't afford, through the property tax base, to continue to pick up even this as an additional cost to all of the other costs that the government is forcing down upon them.

1540

Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Centre): I'm pleased to comment on the excellent speech on the part of the member for Durham East. I know he started his comments last Thursday and he finished them today. I was able to listen on both days to that excellent presentation he made.

It was a very convincing speech, I might add, especially today when he spoke about the regional development charges in Durham being \$7,308, the local being \$5,131,

and the other cost, which would total \$13,068. I know he would also want to add the education development charge, which was over \$1,500, so that's also added on. He spoke of the cost there would be to people who buy these new homes. For the average working family who amortizes that mortgage over 25 years it would be an enormous cost, and a barrier, I might add, to some people choosing to buy that new home. Those new homes are producing jobs right across Ontario.

There are many quotes where people are very much in favour of the Development Charges Act. I quote John Barber in the *Globe and Mail* of November 29, 1996:

"Nowhere else in North America are potential citizens made to pay such a stiff head tax. And what do they get for their money? That is a good question. If all those costs are legitimate, then how can the money never get spent?"

"Mississauga, to cite the most notorious case, maintains a reserve of \$450 million raised entirely from lot levies. Officials there will tell you the money is all earmarked for vitally important projects. But the vitally important projects never seem to get built. What we now seem to have is an almost scam, custom-designed to keep moderate-income people out of the new suburbs."

I think that's absolutely deplorable, and I commend the member for Durham East for his fine presentation today.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I'm surprised that the member for Scarborough Centre would have launched into a full frontal attack on Hazel McCallion, the mayor of Mississauga, who I've always noted to be a very moderate individual with a very open mind to matters of this kind. He has criticized her, obviously, by suggesting that the development charges they have in Mississauga are somehow being directed to the wrong places. I'll make sure she gets a copy of this Hansard so she can respond appropriately.

I want to indicate one of the problems with what the government is proposing. There is no guarantee that if a development charge is removed or if it's not as high, the cost of the house will be lower. It could well go into the developer's pocket. There's no guarantee of that. That is the one compelling argument the government makes.

Let me tell you why municipalities are really concerned about this bill. They're concerned because they recognize that this government is dumping on the municipalities new heavy financial responsibilities for areas over which they had no jurisdiction in the past. They're going to be stuck with ambulance services; they're going to be stuck entirely with public health; they have long-term-care obligations; they have some obligations now coming in terms of social services; they have certainly many additional concerns that are being brought forward about social housing now being dumped on local municipalities.

If you wonder why those local municipalities are so worried about Bill 98, which gives a break to the development community by restricting development charges that can be imposed across the province, it's because they're very fearful of the downloading and the ultimate consequences two and three and four years down the line,

after the slush fund that will look after next year is all exhausted.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Durham East.

Mr O'Toole: I'd like to thank the members for Kingston and The Islands and Dovercourt, of course my good friend Mr Newman from Scarborough Centre and the member for St Catharines, Mr Bradley, for their comments in response to the discussion on Bill 98.

One particular point I would like to leave in people's minds is the fairness. Clearly growth should pay for growth. What level of service is an important issue that should be decided locally. I think we all agree with that. Local government: All government is local; I've heard that expression.

There are exemptions. It's very important to understand that this government is working with small business. When I refer to section 4 — I'd like members to listen to this very important exemption: Industrial expansion of up to 50% of gross floor space will be exempt from the development charge. That's an important recognition that small business creates jobs. I would put to you, if the service capacity is there, if the pipe is there and the building is being expanded, what real cost to the municipality is there?

If you want to look at governments — Mr Gerretsen made a few comments on whether the charge was big enough. We're for less tax, not more tax; less tax, more jobs. That's what this government's entire plan is about. You've got to listen to the small taxpayer; he or she is the person paying the bill.

That exemption, along with another, clearly recognizes opportunities for the municipality to look at the level of service over 10 years. We don't want to go into creating a whole higher level of service. The taxpayer has had it up to here. They're against the wall. Development charges clearly recognize fair and reasonable cost for service; growth should pay for growth. I applaud our Minister of Municipal Affairs, Al Leach. He's done a wonderful job.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Alex Cullen (Ottawa West): It's with great pleasure that I rise today to participate in the debate regarding the government's new Development Charges Act. This is an important piece of legislation that would help shape urban growth and the form of our communities. It also involves huge amounts of public tax dollars to fund the costs of land development. In this context, it is a bill that has provoked a great deal of criticism from municipalities who, after all, will be forced to live with the consequences of this bill.

As members of this House know, I have had some experience in this matter as a former member of the regional council of Ottawa-Carleton and as a member of its planning and environment committee for the past five years. As a matter of fact, I was able to make a presentation to the standing committee on resources development when it was holding its hearings with respect to this piece of legislation.

Bill 98 deals with an important tool, development charges, that affects not only housing costs and municipal

services, but as well the taxes needed to support them and clearly land use. Therefore, I thought it would be useful, before reviewing the proposed legislation on how this legislation affects land use, to recall the principles regarding land use that this government, the Harris government, has enunciated.

On May 22, 1996, the government, through the Lieutenant Governor in Council, issued under the authority of the Planning Act a provincial policy statement governing land use planning. Specifically, under section 2 of that statement, entitled "Principles," the government stated: "Ontario's long-term economic prosperity, environmental health and social well-being depend on:

"(1) managing change and promoting efficient, cost-effective development and land use patterns which stimulate economic growth and protect the environment and public health."

Further on in the policy statement, under "Policies," the government stated: "It is a policy of the province of Ontario that," under 1.1.1, "cost-effective development patterns will be promoted."

Under 1.1.2: "Land requirements and land use patterns will be based on...

"(b) densities which: (1) efficiently use land, resources, infrastructure and public service facilities; (2) avoid the need for unnecessary and/or uneconomical expansion of infrastructure; (3) support the use of public transit in areas where it exists or is to be developed."

Under (d) in the same subsection: "Development standards which are cost-effective and which will minimize land use consumption and reduce servicing costs; and

"(e) providing opportunities for redevelopment, intensification and revitalization in areas that have sufficient existing or planned infrastructure."

It is a short step in logic and economic theory — and, I should mention in parentheses that my professional background is as an economist — to the position that the Legislature ought to adopt that land development charges should be fully cost-recoverable for the services being provided to new residential communities. These services, as we all know, include roads, transit, water, sewer, sidewalks, lighting, police, fire protection, schools, parks, hospitals, community centres, libraries and recreational facilities. These are what we consider today to be the basic building blocks of any healthy community. They're there as part of the community; how shall they be paid for?

If we are indeed to have efficient, cost-effective land use, as stated by the government's own land use policies, then we cannot allow public subsidies to cloud or undermine efficiency. With full infrastructure pricing, the market will be able to match consumer demand with housing supply, including the community services associated with that housing, because, as had been mentioned earlier, you cannot buy a house strictly in isolation at a price that will clear the market. It is through both competition and price that innovation will occur. While the housing industry may seek public subsidies to lower costs and therefore sell more products, one has to ask, products of what? It is not

simply housing; it's housing within a healthy community that provides all those important services and features.

1550

We, and by that I mean the taxpayers of Ontario, cannot afford more urban sprawl. Municipalities have already lost significant provincial subsidies that previously helped reduce the cost of development. In 1992, when the regional municipality of Ottawa-Carleton's development charge bylaw was first passed, the region at that time received some \$76.5 million in provincial subsidies for programs not related to health, social services or child care. In other words, the \$76.5 million was moneys that were received from the province that were spent on transportation, public transit, water and sewers. By 1997 that amount had been reduced to \$44.3 million, basically the municipal support program and public transit operating subsidy, and by 1988 this amount will be reduced to zero dollars as a result of the government's infamous Bill 152 on provincial downloading.

The loss of \$76.5 million in funding for hard services, maintenance and growth has to be made up from somewhere, and according to this government, it will be made up from property taxes. These are moneys that would have been paying for new growth, urban growth, and the government is going to be saying it should come from property taxes. This is wrong.

It is worth noting that the Crombie Who Does What commission, which recommended to the government that the public transit subsidy to municipalities be eliminated, stated that the subsidy was distorting municipal planning decisions, leading to low-density, transit-inefficient development. Apparently the government has accepted this argument. How can it now say to municipalities that municipalities must now subsidize land use costs for developers? If it is to be consistent with both its land use policy statement and the recommendations it has received from the Who Does What commission, it must support the ability of municipalities to set full-cost recovery development charges.

The government likes to pretend that Bill 98 will increase municipal accountability. If this is to be so, then why is the government legislating a municipal subsidy of local property tax dollars to reduce land developer costs? The government's own Common Sense Revolution, of which I have a copy not yet autographed, speaks of cutting subsidies to business by some \$200 million. Why then —

Mr Ron Johnson (Brantford): It makes a good read. You haven't read it.

Mr Cullen: I have read this document many times. This is what confounds me with respect to Bill 98, that the government insists the municipalities must now subsidize business after taking out some \$200 million. It is our community property tax dollars. If the government is so intent on ensuring there is municipal accountability, then leave it to the municipal taxpayers. If our taxpayers want to subsidize business like land developers for whatever reason, then the decision should belong to their locally elected representatives, who are accountable to them for their tax dollars. Forcing a municipality to contribute to

the costs of new development by provincial legislation reduces accountability; it does not improve it.

The government should also recognize that municipalities should have the ability to set differential development charges by area municipality to reflect differences in the costs of providing community services to the new developments. To require, as someone suggested, a one-size-fits-all approach in setting development charges across the municipality ignores the reality of providing service to that area, masks the true cost of land use, provides cross-subsidization from less costly, more efficient land use to more costly, less efficient areas and creates a disincentive to make better use of our existing infrastructure and revitalize existing neighbourhoods, contrary to the very principles enunciated by the government's own land use policy which I just outlined earlier.

Let me give you an example. The regional municipality of Ottawa-Carleton recently completed a review of its official plan, and as part of its review, developed a regional development strategy to govern the direction of growth for the region for the next 25 years. We anticipate in Ottawa-Carleton growing from a population of some 678,000 in 1991 to just over a million in the year 2021, requiring some 137,000 new dwelling units by that year. The new regional official plan designates the major urban area within the national capital greenbelt where there is existing infrastructure, which has about 476,000 people and five urban areas outside the greenbelt, which now have a population of 200,000. To accommodate this growth will require new infrastructure.

The regional government of Ottawa-Carleton has sought the most efficient land use path possible, recognizing both consumer demand and infrastructure constraints, mixing both residential intensification and new development to reduce the predicted capital cost of growth from its previous official plan from over \$500 million a year to about \$120 million a year. This works out to about a \$2-billion reduction in those costs over the lifetime of the plan, significant savings for the local taxpayer.

Even to achieve this, according to regional government staff analysis — based, by the way, on pre-mega-week announcements — mill rate increases will still be required for most of the period to finance roads and public transit, particularly in the new urban growth areas. As well, water rate and sewer charge increases would be needed.

However, within the region, costs per additional dwelling units do vary by area within Ottawa-Carleton for water, waste water, road and public transit costs. These costs range from about \$7,500 per door inside the greenbelt, which is already developed, which takes advantage of existing infrastructure, going out to about \$13,500 all the way out to \$18,500 in the suburban growth areas. The question is, who's going to pay for these new infrastructure costs?

This clearly shows that dwelling costs are lower inside the greenbelt where infrastructure already exists and higher outside the greenbelt where new infrastructure would have to be created. It should therefore also be noted that if 40,000 more units were shifted from inside the

greenbelt to the urban areas outside the greenbelt, it would cost us — I mean us as regional government taxpayers — some \$400 million more in capital costs, therefore underlining the whole argument for more efficient use for infrastructure and therefore those kinds of incentives to reduce urban sprawl.

By allowing development charges to vary by area, reflecting the true cost of development, more efficient land use would be encouraged, existing infrastructure would be better used and existing neighbourhoods revitalized, meeting those very principles that were outlined in the government's land use policy statement. Bill 98, therefore, should permit municipalities to set such differential development charges, assuming the cost differences can be properly documented to recover those costs.

Documentation is an important point. As apparently few government side members know, the setting of development charges is by bylaw, requires a public process, requires documentation and is appealable to the Ontario Municipal Board. Therefore, unlike what some government members have said — and I was there at the standing committee on resources development, hearing the government side members saying that development charges were simply a licence for municipalities to charge exorbitant land costs. That is simply not so. It has to be verifiable. It is open to third-party scrutiny and is appealable to the Ontario Municipal Board, which of course our well-heeled friends from the development community do when they have cause to do so.

Municipalities simply cannot set whatever development charges they feel like. If it is the government's wish indeed to stimulate the housing industry, then it has its own tax dollars to do that. However, existing property taxes should not be forced to subsidize the costs of new development. Forcing a subsidy not only contradicts the notion of accountability, but it masks land use costs, leading to less than rational or efficient land use decisions. Further, efficient land use should be promoted through differential development charges. Unfortunately, Bill 98 does not achieve this. Instead, it forces property tax dollars to subsidize the profit of the land development industry, in astounding contradiction to the goals enunciated by the Harris Common Sense Revolution, but a fact none the less.

I had initially put these remarks together in light of the pre-mega-week announcements that came down in January and have been modified slightly in May and in August. We're waiting to hear the latest plan D by now with respect to Bill 152. The fact remains that the costs of land development are now being further passed on to the local taxpayer as a result of the additional cost for public transit, social housing, welfare and the like, and yet this bill will force some of these costs to be subsidized through the taxpayer instead of being charged directly to the land developer and the people who wish to buy those new homes out in that community.

If indeed we want to have more efficient land use, then price has to be a factor. If we subsidize the costs of these lands, therefore we are subsidizing inefficient land use. It

behooves the members opposite to read again the Crombie commission *Who Does What* report that dealt with the very issue with respect to public transit.

It is unfortunate that this government seeks to say it is stimulating housing and stimulating jobs through a public subsidy that it is not paying for, that it is requiring the local property taxpayer to pay for from local property taxes.

1600

People set property taxes for development within their own community. They do not see the point, when they live in the inner core, when they've paid for all those pipes, they've paid for that water, they're paying for the community centre, for the arena, for the libraries that all make up the quality of life they're paying for through their property taxes, why they should pay again for new development miles away, for someone else to come and piggyback on the quality of life they have already paid for. Indeed, it should be their responsibility, they say to me as I go knocking on doors in my own community, if someone wants to buy out in that new community in the outer suburbs, to pay for the costs of their community, whether it be the hard services or the soft services, as they themselves paid for 20 or 30 years before. That's the argument they put forward and that is what the municipalities have been putting forward in their submissions with respect to Bill 98.

It is completely unfortunate that the government misconstrues and says, "Oh, my Lord, the costs of development should not be borne by the hapless homeowner, those new families, those young families trying to buy new homes." If the government is consistent with its own land use policies that it proclaimed less than a year ago, then it should be searching to put into place the incentives to ensure that existing infrastructure is better utilized. In that way, we can inhibit urban sprawl. That way we make better use of our resources and better use of our environment.

The only way to do that is to ensure that development charges properly reflect the cost of development. Where we have existing infrastructure, development charges will be much less. Where we have brand-new infrastructure, it costs money to send out pipe, to send out water, to provide for the roads, to extend public transit. If you have a low density — because if you subsidize land development costs, you will have less intensive development and therefore less efficient development — that must cover the costs of public transit and all the other hard and soft services. Bear in mind that you just cannot have a community without schools, without libraries, without community centres, without all those things that contribute towards a healthy community.

Ergo, if we are going to have those kinds of healthy communities, someone must pay for the cost. Yet this government — and I am amazed — this Harris government is insisting that property tax dollars subsidize the costs of those developments. Bear in mind it's a seller-sell, buyer-buy market, and assuredly there will be provisions made to ensure that the costs of the developer are

covered. If he's going to build to a market that is willing to pay \$150,000, \$200,000, \$250,000, he'll build to it. If you are going to ensure there is a subsidy dealing with the cost of his land, because there has to be the linking up not only with the hard services, pipe, roads and the like, he will take advantage of the fact, selling that property that is in a wonderful community, that has easy access to shopping, easy access to schools, easy access to community centres. Who pays for those public services, for the community centres, for the policing, for the libraries etc that contribute to that notion of a community? It's the property taxpayer who pays for it.

Here's a new development. I heard the members opposite say that growth should pay for growth, yet this bill requires a public subsidy. It's wrong, Mr Speaker, it's absolutely wrong. You know this as well as I do, coming from a municipal background.

All I can say is that the government is totally inconsistent in its approach here. Yes, it wants to seek to promote jobs, but it doesn't realize that if we waste our environment, if we cost taxpayers dollars, we're taking away funds that could be better used to meet community needs. If it is the government's intention to create jobs, let it use its money; let it not require municipalities therefore to cross-subsidize through the use of property tax dollars.

Particularly as a result of Bill 152, municipal tax dollars are paying more and more for services that in our view properly belong at the provincial level. I think of such things as welfare, child care and social housing. These issues, which are now being downloaded through Bill 152 on to the municipalities, properly belong to the provincial level, and here you are, through Bill 98, forcing local property taxpayers to pay more towards the costs of these services as we have new development, as the suburbs grow in our communities. How else are we going to ensure that we have more efficient land use if we cannot allow price to more properly reflect the cost of that development? That is my submission.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Questions or comments?

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): Before I speak, I don't believe there's a quorum. Would you check?

The Acting Speaker: Would you check for a quorum, please.

Clerk Assistant (Ms Deborah Deller): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk Assistant: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member for London Centre.

Mrs Boyd: I'm pleased to have an opportunity to congratulate the member for Ottawa West on his discussion of the development charges. One of the things that's very important is that the government learn to listen to those who have experience within their own community of the effect of government practices. With his experience with the regional council in Ottawa, he has been able to bring to this discussion very concrete numbers, very concrete examples of what effect this bill, in conjunction with the

download, is going to have on the taxpayers of the regional municipality of Ottawa-Carleton. This is the kind of information the municipal leaders across the province have been trying to bring to this government on these issues all along.

One of the big problems we find is that, for many reasons, this government appears anxious to listen only to those who agree with their own opinion, not to those who are going to have to enforce and those who are going to have to live with the kinds of policies this government is setting. Again and again we see this government ignoring its own panel, the Who Does What panel, clearly saying this was not a good bill and did not meet the needs they were identifying in Who Does What. They did not listen to municipal leaders until the mayor of Mississauga had to call a halt to the expansion in Mississauga until there were some changes made.

In fact, everything this government does has to come to a point of confrontation before there's any kind of compromise at all. Even when there's some kind of compromise, it still leaves the municipalities holding the bag for the policies this government is shoving through against their wishes.

1610

Mr Bruce Smith (Middlesex): It's my pleasure to comment briefly on the member's comments on the Development Charges Act. I do so from the perspective of not only a government member, but a person who has been a practitioner in the planning field and had the opportunity to write development charges under the previous legislation that we've had.

Very clearly, the Minister of Municipal Affairs recognized that a new approach to that process was required, that a new scope be established so that the problems that had been encountered, in some jurisdictions, I would add, not all — so that the scope could be redefined and a new approach established, one that clearly provided a balance. I think very clearly this particular piece of legislation finds that balance and attempts to do so.

The government has attempted to find that balance by consulting with municipalities, homeowners and others that have an interest in development charges in our communities. As an individual, I was pleased and encouraged by the minister's efforts to secure professional advice outside of the normal consultation process to ensure that we were bringing forward a piece of legislation that was consistent with practical applications in the field and, as well, the overall direction that the government of Ontario wanted to pursue with respect to this issue.

Clearly there are continued concerns that have been expressed over a period of time about the application of the existing legislation and, as I indicated before, the scope in terms of those types of items that were being included and in my opinion were never intended to be included in development charges across this province. Very clearly the minister has moved to establish legislation that not only provides that balance but provides a clear understanding of what we can expect to have charged in the context of a development charge.

The process we went through was one of consultation, where we secured input from all practitioners and those involved in the community, and certainly that ought to be recognized as we move to balance a new piece of legislation that's responsive to industry and community needs.

Mr Bradley: The member for Ottawa West didn't have a chance to speak about this, but I was wondering where the idea for this bill must have come from. All of the ideas seem to originate in the same think tank, a think tank that's referred to as the whiz kids' corner.

Last night I had a chance, because there was a gathering at a charity auction, to be introduced to Guy Giorno, almost as powerful as the Premier of the province of Ontario. I'm wondering, when we're talking about this bill, if perhaps he had something to do with this bill, that little think tank that they have that comes forward with all of these —

Interjection.

Mr Bradley: The member for Scarborough whatever is getting very cranky on the other side. I don't know why. She must recognize that obviously Guy Giorno and the whiz kids had far more power than she. After her interjection, I can say to her I certainly very much understand why she would resent those individuals, because I would if I were she as well.

When we look at who develops the policy, I always wonder where the ideas come from, these ideas on the other side, especially when I hear references made to Roy McMurtry's fund-raiser and Susan Fish's fund-raiser. I just wonder why these references are made from time to time.

Anyway, I keep wondering where the idea for a bill like this would come from, because the municipalities need the funds to carry out their responsibilities, and without those funds they are going to be in even more dire straits than they have been in the past because of the downloading policies of the government of Mike Harris, which will cause them a lot of financial angst.

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): I listened carefully to the comments by the member for Ottawa West. I understand, as so many folks out there understand, this is a bill about friendships. It is. It's a bill about relationships. It's a bill about tight, close buddies. It's a bill about fulfilling one's obligations.

The intimacy between the development community and Mike Harris and his gang of Tories is one of fulfilling obligations. It's a bill about the developer pocketing the money — he's got that cash — and then writing a cheque at the end of the year to Mike Harris and getting a little more back from the taxpayer, because the taxpayer subsidizes that contribution as well.

It's a bill about this government being so deep in the back pockets of developers that they're spitting out lint. It's a bill about telling communities that the developers making the big profits are going to be making even bigger profits on the backs of the taxpayers in those communities. It's a bill about making sure that developers can make bigger and bigger profits but can ignore the responsibility to ensure that communities are real communities.

Tories don't believe in the kind of communities that Ontarians have historically believed in. Tories don't believe in parks, they don't believe in recreation centres, they don't believe in libraries. Why, they don't believe in schools. They don't believe in those things that make neighbourhoods places where people and families can live and grow. They'll settle for the most sterile and mundane and Bucharest of designs, all for the sake of bigger profits for their development buddies and to ensure the ongoing relationship is a tight and intimate one.

The Acting Speaker: The member's time has expired. The member for Ottawa West has two minutes to respond.

Mr Cullen: I'd like to thank the members for London Centre, Middlesex, St Catharines and Welland-Thorold for their contribution to this debate.

I have to say at the close of this debate that the myths the government is trying to perpetuate with respect to this bill still concern me. There are two myths. One is that this bill will protect the homeowner from being gouged, and the other one is that this will promote jobs.

I have to say on the first instance, why should property taxpayers be gouged? Why should they pay for the costs of this new development? The facts remain that there are genuine costs to new development, and people who have lived for 20 or 30 years, as they have in my riding, which was built after the Second World War, are paying taxes for new development across the greenbelt — new pipe, new water, new sewers, new public transit, all that stuff. They're having to pay more in property taxes for that development and they're saying: "We've already paid for ours here. Why should we pay that property tax?" But your bill, Minister, is going to make them pay for that.

The second thing is municipal charges. The members opposite say that the municipalities create these things from whole cloth, and indeed that is nonsense. The members opposite know that this has to go through a public process. It must be documented. It's open to third-party review. It's reviewable by the Ontario Municipal Board. You cannot just come in and say, "We're going to create this massive garden over here and you're going to have to pay for it." That's nonsense. If people don't appeal these things to the municipal board, I can't help them, but I can tell you that in Ottawa-Carleton, the land developers are involved in the development charges process, they have the ability to review this, and they can take the region to the Ontario Municipal Board.

All I can say to the members opposite is that your legislation is going to cause property taxes to be higher than they ought to be if it wasn't for full-cost recovery, and it's your bill that's doing it.

The Acting Speaker: The member's time has expired. Further debate?

Mrs Boyd: I'm pleased to have an opportunity to talk about this bill because there are a number of ways in which one can approach a bill like this. One thing that strikes me in reading the bill is how careful the minister and the government have been about laying out the obligations for the municipality to consult around the formation of the rules, as my friend from Ottawa West was

pointing out in his response. If you go through this bill, large sections spell out the obligations for consultation, for appeal by municipalities around this bill. I'm not saying I think that's inappropriate. I think it's very important for citizens of a jurisdiction to have an opportunity to be notified of changes, to have an opportunity to respond to that notification, to have an opportunity to be consulted, to have an opportunity to appeal if a decision goes against them, to have a further avenue of appeal if that first appeal fails. I believe very strongly in that process.

What's amazing is that this minister and this government are bringing forward this detailed process that municipalities have to follow in the case of development charges when they themselves rule virtually by fiat, when they have set up rules in this place that allow them to shove legislation through without public consultation, where bill after bill that this government brings forward denies to people the possibility of any appeal, where there is absolutely no opportunity for people to tell this government how they feel, and even when they create that opportunity themselves, this government, and in particular this minister, does not listen to what the citizens are saying.

1620

Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): How many days did you have on the social contract? I can give you the answer: none.

Mrs Boyd: Mr Speaker, I refuse to be provoked by the minister, who is obviously trying to provoke me and to speak over me, which is his usual bully tactic. It's just more of the same. On every bill this minister has brought forward, that's his behaviour, that anyone who speaks against him is wrong and he has to shout them down, and he has to go further and further to try to silence people. That's exactly what his behaviour is like, and he's showing it again today.

One of the things that is very annoying to anyone who has tried to deal with this minister on any of the issues he has brought forward is that the absolute contempt for the democratic process this minister displays and is allowed to display consistently by his Premier is what has caused a lot of the conflict within this province over the last two years. It is absolutely remarkable that on the smallest issue this minister goes through a process of trying to deny others their right to speak, in contempt of this Legislature and elsewhere.

The Acting Speaker: Order. I'd like to just address for a minute if I could those who are here. I'd like you to temper —

Mr Gilles Pouliot (Lake Nipigon): Kick him out.

The Acting Speaker: Order. I'd like you to temper your language. I would like the debate to concentrate on the bill and on those things in the bill that are agreed with and disagreed with, and I'd like to call a halt right now to the personal comments and so on that would be made between members.

Mrs Boyd: Indeed I was speaking about the bill, Mr Speaker, because I think one of the good things about this bill is the extensive consultation and appeal procedure

that's written in. I just wish that were available to the citizens of Ontario on many of the issues this government is bringing forward in terms of this Legislature. I am definitely speaking to the bill and saying this is the kind of democratic process that should pertain.

One of the things that has always been rather amusing about the machinations of this government as it tries to deal with the Development Charges Act is the fact that they're caught, as my colleague from Welland-Thorold pointed out, between two sets of friends. If there is at all any balance in this bill, the balance is there because those two friends forced the government to come to some compromise in terms of their position. Those friends, the 905 mayors and the developers, clearly had a great deal to do with the kind of priorities that were set by this government in this bill, and their arguments back and forth, which we all read on the front pages of the papers, which we all saw in very acrimonious debate, drew the government closer to some kind of compromise. But I would point out, as my colleague from Ottawa West did, that that compromise falls far short of what some of the community members wanted to see.

I want to talk a little bit about the whole issue of what it takes to build a healthy community and why this bill is so bad because it limits the possibility of building healthy communities at the local level in a way that is going to work, given the current download of services in the province. We all know that the government denies that the download is going to erode the services we now enjoy, and we all know that the government is denying that with this bill the changes to development charges are going to put an added burden on taxpayers if they are going to build healthy communities.

By limiting the flexibility of municipalities to use the development charge route to pay for a lot of the amenities that make communities livable and healthy places, this government is essentially saying to municipalities, "If you want a healthy community, you're going to have to raise taxes because you can't use this method any more to finance those kinds of amenities." They are very severely limited in terms of how they can use development charges. With the exception of public libraries, a lot of the soft services that really are so essential within communities are very seriously limited in terms of the way in which the development charges apply.

I wouldn't worry about that so much if we didn't have all sorts of examples, particularly in the 905 area, of rapidly growing municipalities, municipalities that have grown very rapidly over the last 10 to 15 years, where the municipal councils, where they have had discretion, have not put their dollars into a lot of the community-building services. We know that a lot of the problems that occur in some of the newer areas, particularly the newer areas where the density of population is fairly high, are because those kinds of amenities are not provided to the extent that they ought to be in a growing and a needy community. When you take away from municipalities a lot of the possibility of paying for some of these services through

development charges, that problem is only exacerbated, and that's a real concern to all of us.

Any of us who have lived or know a lot about the service delivery mechanisms in some of the 905 areas know that they appear not to have in any way their fair share of services. When you go through subdivision after subdivision where there's a great big sign in a big empty field saying this was going to be a community centre or this was going to be a library or this was going to be a school but they never get built — partly the fault of municipality, partly the fault of the provincial government — we know there are large areas of these newer municipalities that do not have the services close to home that give rise to healthy communities. There are not the kinds of places where people can gather, where they can offer programs, where they can do all that building of community that happens, whether it's in a recreational setting or in an educational setting.

One of the real issues here is what the long-term effects are going to be of limiting the municipalities in their ability to use development charges to ensure those amenities are there in their communities. Of course, the government will say those municipalities can build those things using their tax base, but you know, it gets more and more difficult to do that as the download makes it clearer and clearer to municipalities not only that they are bearing a huge additional cost on their tax base, way above the so-called neutral position this government keeps insisting is the case, but also because of some of the other problems that are being created by other forms of download and cutback in our community.

What we really have is a situation where bill after bill brought forward by this government, including this one, is attacking the very fibre of healthy communities. As you drive down the services that are available in communities, you break some of the very important connections that really make sure community is built and community is healthy. This is just a piece of a much bigger picture around the destruction of healthy communities, but it's a pretty important piece.

To justify itself, the government talks about the fact that this will make housing cheaper. They keep saying that if developers didn't have to pay large development charges, then houses wouldn't cost as much. We have no evidence that's the case. In fact, for the last few months, we've been reading about the increasing prices, the increasing pressure within the housing market.

I look at the homes section in the newspapers all the time and I don't see any reduction or any indication that there will be a reduction in the cost of homes as a result of this. Maybe there should be, but why would anyone expect that to be passed on to the homeowner in an economic situation where the demand for housing is growing all the time and the ability of the developer to charge the going rate increases with the increased pressure on the housing market? There is no incentive whatsoever, none at all, for developers to pass this on to the prospective homeowner.

1630

My prediction would be, and certainly it becomes very clear to us, that not only will these young families we're supposed to be worried about, these young families that are supposedly going to get a break from the lowering of development charges, have to pay that same money to purchase that house, but once they've purchased that house and are a taxpayer, if they want the services they deserve in that community, if they want a healthy, safe community, they're going to have to pay again or they're not going to have those services. There are very few choices here.

One of the issues we keep raising with this government is that with each successive bill they bring forward that tears away at the fabric of healthy communities, there comes a point at which there is absolutely no benefit to the costs we're incurring.

Development charges may seem like a thing that only those who have to pay them would worry about, or only those who have a prospect of buying a new home might worry about, or even possibly only those who are in a municipal government might worry about, but the reality is we should all be worried about the effect of this bill on the communities in which we live.

I'm not going to be buying a new house in the near future. I live in an old part of my town and I have no plans to move, but in my community there are growing subdivisions and in those growing subdivisions, which because of the land use in our area tend to be on the outskirts of the more populated area, the need for services like transportation services, like all those soft services that make a community a real home is very real.

As my colleague from London South will tell you, he's got a big, sprawling new suburb in his town and without the development charge contribution to building community centres, to building sports fields, to building the kind of community in which they live, they would simply be — I'm probably dating myself by saying this — fields and fields of ticky-tack; no community at all.

That's the real problem with this bill. If we allow an urban sprawl that has none of these services built into it, that has none of these services required and that has none of these services required as a base condition for building the subdivision, then we are simply multiplying those problems. What we see in those communities is very little interaction between citizens because there's no way to come to any kind of meeting place. We find that children are being bused far to school, because of course the whole use of schools is changing with the change in school boards and so on. If there are no community centres, if there are none of these amenities to build community, we're simply going to have places where people live, not healthy communities at all.

I believe very strongly that in the long run it is much wiser to allow municipalities the flexibility and the decision-making around development charges. Municipalities want to build their tax base. They want to expand the number of homes in their area. They are going to be wise enough to balance off the pressure of development charges

with the ultimate goal of having a growing tax base, and they are able to make those decisions without the kind of dictating that this government is doing on behalf of its developer friends around how these development charges can be used.

This government is very fond of saying they trust municipalities not to raise taxes, but they don't seem to trust municipalities to balance the needs within their own areas and to do that in a way that is building a healthy community. That is why we believe this is bad legislation. We think it puts very unfair limits on the flexibility that communities can use to build themselves and to strengthen themselves. We think the whole issue here of the autonomous building and maintaining of communities that is supposed to be the job of municipalities is threatened by the kind of micromanaging this government is trying to do at the municipal level.

I don't expect the minister or the government to listen to me. They haven't listened to David Crombie or the Who Does What commission. They didn't listen to the 905 mayors. They compromised to some extent but they didn't really listen. They haven't listened to all those who are sceptical about the lowering of house costs as a result of the lowering of development charges, or the experience of economists in the area who tell them that's very unlikely to happen in a pressured housing market.

It's more of the same old story. This government has a desire to force other jurisdictions to consult, to have appeal mechanisms, they have a desire to try and make other jurisdictions responsive to those who are their constituents, yet there appears to be no desire at all to have the same kind of responsiveness to the concerns of ordinary people who live in the province, constituents who they say will benefit and who tell them they will not.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Bradley: I want to commend the member for pointing out the deficiencies in this piece of legislation and the dire circumstances municipalities will be facing if indeed this legislation passes. It is a fact that initially the legislation was even more unattractive to municipalities, which then made comment to the committee which travelled around Ontario. As well, there was a barrage of questions from the opposition and speeches from the opposition which obviously wore the government down a bit on this, and we saw some compromise on this legislation.

But the member has appropriately pointed out that in her community of London, for instance, it is essential to have the money derived from the development charges to be able to provide the services which are necessary for those new developments. One cannot expect people in the city who have already made their contribution when their homes were built to turn around now and make an additional contribution to those projects which are necessitated as a result of growth in that municipality.

1640

I heard mention made, for instance, by the member for Scarborough Centre, as the member for London Centre would have noted, of the problem confronted by Mississauga. Mississauga decided it would go heavily into de-

velopment charges. I haven't noted that that has stunted the growth in Mississauga. I know Mayor Hazel McCallion and former councillor Margaret Marland would have been surprised to hear the member for Scarborough Centre suggest that somehow the funds that were collected by means of development charges were directed to something other than the most appropriate causes.

Mr Pouliot: I certainly wish to thank a most articulate spokesperson, my colleague the member for London Centre, on behalf of people. She has studied meticulously what is about to happen with this government. It's a bit of a payback time again this season, the season of giving, giving in this case to the developers. Their pockets must be bulging now with a lot of money, because la payola goes well under Bill 98. Who pays? Who loses in the tradeoff? The home buyers.

You see, when you buy a property, you buy a bit of the library. Location is everything, the place you call your home. You buy the recreation centre, you buy the community centre; it's community. But now you're hit big time. Another 10% will be passed from the developers to the municipality. We know they're already under a state of siege, for starting January 1 they will be paying for social housing, they will be paying for community health etc — they're on their knees — and on top if it now another 10% for development.

The developers will save money. Will they pass the savings along to the consumers? What do you think? Do you wish to bet, maybe make a small wager that if they save \$2,000 per unit, how much of it will go? Will it be half? Will it be all? Will it be nothing at all?

It's not a good day for people, it's not a good day for buyers and it's not a good day for the economy when we allow this kind of exercise without any checkmarks, without any monitoring of compliance to ensure that the savings will be there in the marketplace. I fear they will not be there.

Mr David Caplan (Oriole): It's very interesting to hear some of the arguments. I would certainly commend the words of many of the earlier speakers on this.

I would like to address the impact which Bill 98 will have on municipalities. There's a document — I'll refer to it here — that says the city of Mississauga, if Bill 98 passes, will lose about \$90 million in capital funding for new services over the next 10 years. It's very interesting that we have a deafening silence from the members from Mississauga on the opposite side, why they would not stand up and fight for their particular communities.

The city of Richmond Hill, \$69 million, and it's contemplating, by the way, a 21% increase in property taxes to help pay for new growth in that community; the city of Ajax, \$6 million. I can go on. The city of Brampton is expecting a 24% mill rate increase as a result of the changes in Bill 98. Aurora, 14.5%; East Gwillimbury, 15.2%; Georgina in York region, 13.6%; Markham, 28%.

Are these the kinds of changes this government is looking to make, to take the burden off developers and put it on to property taxpayers? Is that what this is all about? This is an unconscionable action. I hope the members who

represent those areas, many of whom are on that side of the House, would finally stand in their place and speak up on behalf of the people in those communities, their constituents, who will be faced with the hardships of the changes proposed in Bill 98. It is so telling that the members have nothing to say on this.

Mr Kormos: Ms Boyd, the member for London Centre, said the government doesn't listen to her. I beg to differ. The government members have listened well to what Ms Boyd has to say except, you see, that they don't agree with her. Ms Boyd believes in communities, she believes in healthy communities, she believes in neighbourhoods, she believes in community centres and parks and recreation centres. Ms Boyd believes in libraries.

The government hears her, except that they disagree, because they just believe in bigger and bigger profits for their developer buddies, so their developer buddies can continue to write that annual cheque to the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario and to the Reform Party of Canada. It's a matter of, "You scratch my back, I'll scratch yours." This is what goes on in the back rooms. Ms Boyd knows that. The people across the province know that.

They understand that there was some tension between Mayor Hazel McCallion in the city of Mississauga and their interests — strong Tory turf — and the interests of the developer buddies of Mike Harris and the Tory gang. They said, "We'll split the pie up a little bit differently." They told the development communities: "Act mad. Do a little bit of WWF so that people might forget for a minute that we've been lying in the same bed for months and years." When you lie with dogs, you get fleas.

Ms Boyd is being listened to, but she simply has a far different vision from this government. I remind people, here we are debating Bill 98. In approximately 30 minutes I'll be speaking to it. In approximately 30 minutes' time we'll be speaking to Bill 98, the Development Charges Act, here on the legislative channel. I'll be speaking about the people from Castropignano, Italy, a small town just north of Naples, and why that's relevant to this bill today.

The Acting Speaker: The member for London Centre has two minutes to respond.

Mrs Boyd: I want to thank the members for St Catharines, Oriole, Lake Nipigon and Welland-Thorold for their comments.

I am prepared to stand corrected. Actually, the member for St Catharines pointed out that there had been a lot of amendments to this bill, and indeed that's the case. When we look through, we see the little black arrows all over this bill, so it was certainly messed up from the beginning, and there were some changes to it. I take his correction in the manner in which it was meant.

I believe very strongly that for those who have a vision of community as being available only to those who have the private means to pay, this may not be as frightening as it is for people who depend on the public amenities, public services, to enjoy a healthy lifestyle. If you can afford to go to a large health spa and belong to a tennis club and do not worry about having to pay private fees for that, this

may not be quite as frightening as it is for all those families who do not have that opportunity because their income doesn't allow them to do that.

This government tries to paint the development charges as relieving young families of cost when it comes to buying their homes. It will not do that either in the cost of homes because the going rate will be what prevails, but it will cost those young families more and more as time goes on to have the kinds of communities they want for themselves and their children, through their taxes, through charitable contributions to try and build those amenities that now won't be built because of development charge changes.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

1650

Mr Joseph Cordiano (Lawrence): I'm delighted to have an opportunity to speak on this bill, which I think is a rather significant piece of legislation in terms of the province's development over the next number of years, economic, social and cultural as well, because this bill affects what will be cultural development in the future, or lack of it, as a result of the lack of funds, funds that will not flow from what was normally a source of revenue.

The Development Charges Act, as it is conceived, and other speakers have commented on this, I think it's safe to make a prediction that fewer dollars will now go into things like recreation centres and additional amenities which make communities so liveable. I would say, especially over the long term, developers won't benefit from this. The house building industry will not benefit from this in the way you might think. Initially perhaps, I think it's fair to say, the savings will go to developers; the reduction in development charges, those initial savings, will accrue to developers and house builders. Costs will be lower for the developers.

Stephen Kaiser, our friend at the Urban Development Institute, when asked if the developers would pass on savings to home buyers, thought about it and his response was, "Well, the cost of lumber and the cost of materials going into homes might go up and as a result negate any of the savings." It's probably true over the next number of years that any savings that might accrue as a result of the reduction in development charges, to first-time home buyers particularly, who are the bulk of buyers these days, will result in developers pocketing that money and as a result not having to increase their costs for materials. There will be an offset for them. Will they pass those savings on to consumers? No, they won't. They'll be forced into a position where they can't do that, so it defeats the very purpose if the government indeed wanted to do that, pass on savings to home purchasers.

Let's assume for a moment that might be the case. As Stephen Kaiser points out, costs will rise over the next number of years as more houses are built. As there's an increase in demand for these materials, supply is not coming on board as quickly as it should, lumber has increased in price, the price of construction materials is going up, as has been the case already over the last number of years that we've seen an increase in house building,

so what will happen is that those additional costs will have to be absorbed. Usually they get passed on to the consumer. The developer will offset any development charge reductions there are. You might get a levelling off of prices, but the cost savings are not there for the consumer. You're not going to get a reduction in house prices as a result of the reduction in development charges. That won't happen.

While the market won't bear it, there is no direct relationship with respect to the reduction in development charges and what happens at the market level. At least you've got to come clean with that. It just won't happen.

What I think will happen in the long term is that communities that are now on the table for development, projects that are just coming on board that will have to deal with this new Development Charges Act, won't have the amenities, won't have the recreational facilities, won't have all the other amenities that communities have seen over the last number of years. As a result of that, those communities will be less marketable. When they're buying a home, the first thing people look for is a good school in their neighbourhood. The other thing they'll look for is amenities, whether they're close to shopping, whether they're close to recreational facilities for their children, whether transportation is close by, what the conditions of the roads are: Are there good roads? Can they get back and forth from work easily?

When you eliminate those amenities, I venture to guess that those communities that are built in the future as a result of these new development charges will not be as attractive to purchasers, to consumers. As a result, you're defeating the very purpose you intended in the first place.

I would say to you, and this is repeated time and again, if you're out to help the development industry, you haven't done so with this bill. You may help in the short term, but in the long term it just isn't going to prove that valuable, particularly to house builders. House builders will see that something else has to take the place of the development charge. Is it going to be increases in municipal taxes, property taxes?

Earlier, my colleague repeated how much each municipality projects into the future that property taxes will have to increase in order to make up this shortfall. Don Cousens, the mayor of Markham, a former Conservative in this assembly at one time, says that the changes to this act could add as much as 31% to their bottom line as far as this bill is concerned. So it is going to be an increase all around. Even if you don't believe Don Cousens and you don't believe the estimates that were submitted earlier by my colleague, it's fair to say that someone is going to have to pay for these additional amenities. You can't argue with that.

If these cultural centres and recreation centres, the so-called gold-plated services that have been criticized in the past, which in my opinion make cities very liveable and desirable, are going to go by the wayside, then they either don't get built or they can only be built with additional costs to municipalities. Where do they find the revenues for this? Property taxes are not going to increase

dramatically. I think municipalities realize today that they cannot, in all good conscience — and they can't get away with it because the taxpayers won't allow them to do it — increase municipal property taxes. They won't be able to do it.

I think it's fair to say that the argument has been made that new growth should fund new growth. That is to say, people moving into a new-growth area should fund those amenities, those services, soft services, if those amenities are to be built by the municipality. That's the way we've done it in the past and it has worked quite well. Many communities in the rim around Toronto — and I'll speak to that — and many other communities outside of Toronto have become much more liveable as a result of those additional amenities being built — recreational facilities, cultural facilities. It makes this province of ours one of the most liveable places on the face of the earth. That's what is important about this Development Charges Act: that you're changing the very nature of our communities by changing this.

I hope that's not the case. I hope somehow we can find another way to fund those very important amenities, but I haven't heard the government say that in any of this debate. I haven't heard the Minister of Culture and Recreation discuss how we're going to fund those very important undertakings. We haven't heard the minister speak to those concerns.

I can recall a time back in the late 1980s when I had to fight for additional dollars for my community to have a recreation centre built that was adequate, because there were no adequate facilities. Those days are long gone. We're not getting additional dollars in communities these days the way we used to. Everyone understands that. But when we're talking about entirely new communities without any facilities — you can't even argue that they're second-rate facilities and you've got to make do for now; there aren't any facilities — children, particularly young people, will be at a loss.

Mr Kormos: And seniors.

1700

Mr Cordiano: And seniors, yes. Let's not forget seniors. By and large, seniors will be cut off from opportunities to see one another. I think it's very important for seniors to do that, not to be stuck in their own homes, isolated. That's what we did. Over the years we made certain we were building those types of facilities for seniors. It has led to an improvement in their quality of life.

I don't know for the life of me how we can argue that this is a bettering of the quality of life for the citizens of Ontario in the new-growth areas of this province when we know for a fact that in most of the house building taking place today, most of the homes are being purchased by first-time buyers.

When you speak to affordability, and I want to touch on that for just a moment, the government likes to imply that this bill will increase affordability, and I am presuming that you're talking about first-time home buyers. Naturally we would want a better situation, a better climate for first-time home buyers in order that they may purchase that

first home. If I were really to believe that the price of first-time homes would come down, if you somehow directed through this legislation that that would be the case, I might even support this bill. It would be important to recognize making first-time home buyers able to afford that first-time home, and if somehow you were benefiting them, this would be considered by me a very supportable bill. But, again, I don't see that guarantee in this legislation. I don't see how it's possible.

Therefore, one wonders how it is that affordability is being enhanced by this government, particularly at a time when you're offloading to municipalities the cost for public housing, the cost for long-term care. You're offloading a considerable amount of responsibility on to the municipalities and, as a result of that, property taxes may have to increase, although I don't buy that just yet. I think the municipalities out there are very fearful of having to increase their property taxes, so what's going to happen in my opinion is that services will be curtailed. Those services will dramatically be reduced in terms of their quality and how many of those services are available.

You have a situation here where affordability is not something that this government is really considering when dealing with Bill 98. It's not going to result in more affordable homes out there for first-time home buyers or for buyers in new areas particularly with respect to this bill. It's not going to result in any kind of bonus or windfall for first-time home buyers, which is the market that I think really needs assistance at this point in time.

I think you'd be better off to direct that in some way we should have provision made for those amenities to be paid by some other means. That's not the case in this bill; you're simply leaving it up to the municipalities to determine whether they want to build those additional facilities. As I have stated, municipalities will be hard-pressed to be able to fund those additional responsibilities that you have offloaded to them, so where are they going to find the revenue for this? We can only conclude that, in the end, these facilities will not be built and, as a result, young people and seniors will suffer. They won't have those amenities, they won't have those facilities, they won't have those recreational and cultural possibilities.

I think that in the long term it's a bad bill and, as I said earlier, I think those communities will be less desirable for consumers. People are today looking for neighbourhoods with good schools, with those types of amenities. When you reduce those possibilities with this bill, those communities will simply not be as attractive. What you're getting in the long term is a reduction in the opportunities for developers, and it may be shortsighted on everyone's part to embrace this and say this is a solution — I don't think it is the solution.

I think you have to be able to fund these recreational facilities and cultural amenities. All these things are quite essential to the quality of life in any community. They're what makes a community very desirable so, in the end, I don't see that this will resolve anything. It may be a short-term benefit to some developers. They may see it as such, some of them who need relief right now. Again, it's not

any kind of relief for first-time home buyers or buyers of new homes in new areas that are growing in the province. I don't see that they'll benefit from this.

I wonder what it is that you attempted to do. I think other speakers have pointed this out, but this runs counter to the recommendations of the Crombie Who Does What panel. I just want to quote. The Crombie Who Does What panel advocated letting municipalities retain control of development charges, and it had this to say: "Development charges are a critical and essential municipal revenue source for financing growth-related capital infrastructure. Any amendments to the act to reduce the scope or permitted level of development charges will mean higher municipal taxes or user fees."

Let's not forget that user fees will be imposed at one point or another. When a community says, "Enough is enough," we need these facilities. At some point down the road communities will come to that conclusion. Today it's the thin edge of the wedge, but at some point you will have user fees for the use of recreational facilities of all kinds.

My kids are in various programs and we do pay for the use of some of those programs. It's a small fee and it's a reasonable fee. I don't mind paying it, but there are many people who can't afford to pay those user fees. There are numerous families I know of who couldn't send their kids to camp last summer — summer camp. The city of Toronto had to cut back on the opportunity for kids to go to summer camp, and therefore many kids couldn't attend those summer camps because their parents couldn't afford it. It's as simple as that.

This gets piled on to the additional costs that municipalities have to shoulder under this government. It's a pattern that's been repeated over and over and over again by this government, that is, to offload on to municipalities and therefore be able to reduce its own costs provincially. At some point you talk as though you're the taxfighters; the taxcutters. That's not the case. The case is not that you're cutting taxes; it's that you're passing these responsibilities off and therefore making someone else pay for it. Whether it's a user fee or additional municipal property taxes, it is still coming out of the pockets of those consumers you're saying you're trying to help, and it simply isn't on. No one's buying it any longer because there's a lack of credibility with respect to your arguments.

You're trying to suggest time and again that you're passing on these savings, but it's not there. Wait till the next property tax bill hits. The proof will be in the pudding. At that point, I think there will be a huge number of people, particularly in Metropolitan Toronto, who will be outraged to see what happens. There will be a huge problem. There will be chaos when those property tax bills are received by property taxpayers and they won't be able to make out what's going on. Quite frankly, they'll have every right to blame this government for the chaos.

At the end of the day, you haven't solved a thing with respect to what's happening in those growth-related areas with this new Development Charges Act. I think there needed to be a balance with respect to how growth is funded, but the provincial government I believe has a

responsibility for ensuring that there are recreational facilities throughout the province; that those things mean a lot; that those things matter to people; that there are facilities that seniors can go to so that they're not isolated and cut off from their communities and their friends and their neighbours. It's part of a quality of life that you are eroding time and again. This is yet another example of that erosion.

If the bill could guarantee that first-time home buyers were to benefit directly, and we could prove that and we could ensure that would happen, then I think the bill could be saluted. But it certainly isn't the case. Even Stephen Kaiser suggested that he couldn't guarantee that those cost savings could be passed on to home buyers. Therefore, I don't think the government really means what it says.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Questions and comments.

1710

Mr Silipo: I want to congratulate the member for Lawrence for his comments on this bill. It's always good to see him on his feet dealing with this and other issues. As he has pointed out, the government is sort of caught in a bit of a conundrum on this one because on the one hand they tried to portray this as striking a better balance between how we raise some of this money through the development charges versus what happens when you remove some of those costs from the development charges, and then therefore have to have municipalities pick up those costs through the property taxes. But the balance here has really been shifted in my view, and the member for Lawrence talked about this, inordinately on to the shoulders of the property taxpayer and on to the municipality.

Even with that, as he pointed out, what you have is no guarantee that at the end of the day the homeowners who pay for the development charges when they purchase their homes, or other things, but we're talking here largely about people buying new homes, are going to reap any benefit. There's no guarantee that they're going to reap any benefit. Who gains by this? Obviously, it will mean that some of the developers will have fewer costs because the development charges are less.

I would have felt more comfortable, and I think all of us would've felt more comfortable, if there had been a passing on to the homeowners, in some direct way, of some of those savings that the developers will now save as a result of not having to pay as much in development charges. At least that could have somehow justified the increases those same homeowners will have to pay, initially and ongoing, through the increases in property taxes this will mean.

The member for Lawrence touched on all of these issues as he expressed the concerns he did around this measure of the government.

Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls): I just want to rise to speak to the member's comments on Bill 98. One of the things that caught my ear was his comment that folks have less money in their pockets now as a result of municipal increases and user fee increases that he claims are there. He should know — he should ask his own member from

Scarborough, for instance; as our members from Scarborough on this side of the table would know because they are informed — that there's been actually a large reduction in user fees in Scarborough. One example I have been told about is a water surcharge that was removed in Scarborough. There's actually a trend the other way in many municipalities as people realize it's time for that fiscal management throughout the province and are doing that.

There was one comment about less money in people's pockets and that someone didn't have enough money to send their kids to summer camp. Maybe that's, because they're spending their money on cars and trucks, because car and truck sales soared 15% over last year; 18 months in a row we've had increases in car and truck sales. It's really clear that, because of tax cuts, people have a lot more money in their pockets. They are spending a heck of a lot more money. If it were coming out of their pockets from another source, they wouldn't be doing that. But the evidence has been in over the past 18 and 20 months. Investor confidence is soaring; consumer confidence is absolutely soaring for the first time in a decade in this province.

For the member opposite to say these tax cuts are just being taken away to another level of government is untrue. The facts say something totally different when one looks at the economy. Consumption lagged in the Ontario economy for many years. It's now picking up and it is now finally driving our economy to new heights.

Mr Gerretsen: First of all, I'd like to congratulate the member for Lawrence for an excellent presentation as to what's wrong with this current act. I'm also very pleased to see in the House tonight the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. At the appropriate time I will move unanimous consent so that he will be allowed to respond to this: How can he justify on the one hand giving the municipalities many more services to look after, like ambulance services, social, housing, more of the welfare costs, public health, transit — you could just go on and on — and at the same time say that municipalities will now have a greater opportunity to raise their funds and, on the other hand, through the Development Charges Act, in effect, tell municipalities, "You cannot charge more than such and such." He wants to give them more power. Why is he taking it away in this particular area? I'd like him to explain that, to give a cogent explanation of that.

I will be moving unanimous consent as soon as I'm finished so that we can hear him and the people of Ontario can hear him as well. I'm sure he'd be more than pleased to answer that because it doesn't make any sense. It doesn't make any sense that when you say you want municipalities to run their own affairs you say, "You cannot do this, that or the other thing when it comes to development charges."

The other thing that is very interesting is that the municipalities that have the highest development charges also happen to be the fastest-growing municipalities. If these development charges inhibit growth, then why are these municipalities, such as the Mississaugas, such as the Durhams, such as the Markhams, growing at such a tre-

mendously rapid rate? I will now move unanimous consent that the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing address this issue immediately.

The Speaker: The member for Kingston and The Islands is seeking unanimous consent for the minister to address an issue. Agreed? No.

Questions and comments?

Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East): I want to congratulate the member for Lawrence on his comments here this afternoon and I want to just reinforce a few of the points he raised.

First of all, the bill really does ensure that the existing tax base in a community — those people who have already made payments on their homes, made payments on the services in the part of the community where they live are now going to pick up an additional 10% of the costs for development in new areas. They are going to be subsidizing costs even though they have paid for their fair share in terms of the area in which they live. That is just another form of download on to the local taxpayers, this time spread across the whole community. That is in essence what it is: another form of download, another form of tax increase for other people who live in a municipality, who are going to subsidize that new development.

Second, I've heard a number of members from the government try to argue that what will happen is if you reduce some of those costs that are now on the per-lot cost, the cost of a home for an average family who wants to buy is going to go down. There is absolutely nothing in this bill that guarantees that a developer is going to turn around and lower the price of a house because he or she does not now have to pay some of the costs because the municipality and the whole tax base is picking that up. There is no incentive for the developer to do that. The developer is just as likely to see how much the market will bear and pocket all of that as a profit; absolutely no guarantee that the price of houses for families is going to go down.

Third, you have to take this in the context of the whole provincial download or dump that's going on. Which municipality, faced with all of the services and all of the associated costs that this government wants to download, is going to be in a position to pay an extra 10% for a recreational centre, library or a community centre in a new area? They just won't.

The Speaker: Response, member for Lawrence.

Mr Cordiano: I've listened to the comments and I appreciate all of the comments. I would just reiterate that I think this bill is shortsighted. It does not look to a longer-term solution. In the short term it will be beneficial only to the house builders. The price of homes will not come down as a result of this. In fact, it may not be beneficial to house builders either because they're looking at additional costs having to be borne as a result of increases in material prices.

There's only so much the market will bear. At some point, this will not even benefit developers in the long term. It certainly won't, because as I pointed out, amenities and facilities that would have been built that would

make their new subdivisions more attractive, those new communities will not have those amenities.

I can't think for a moment that municipalities would want to raise municipal property taxes. They're going to have to bear the brunt of all the downloading that's taking place as a result of additional services that are passed on because of this government's download to the municipalities for social housing, for long-term care, for ambulance services and a number of other essential services that municipalities will be hard-pressed to provide. They're not going to want to increase municipal property taxes to pay for these additional amenities. They simply won't do it.

These communities will be lacking in those facilities for years to come, and I don't think that's going to be very attractive. These new communities will be less attractive, and as a result developers may not find this to be such a windfall after all, not in the long term certainly. I think the government should revisit this. Yes, it's in its final reading before the House, but I think the government is —

The Speaker: Further debate?

1720

Mr Kormos: I've been eager, anxious to participate in this debate. I have but a scant 10 minutes of course. It's because of the Tory rule changes, and there surely should be a more appropriate period of time because what this bill is about is communities. The bill is about communities and about the nature of our communities once the Tories are finished with towns, cities, families and neighbourhoods here in Ontario.

When I talk to you about communities, I feel compelled to talk to you about a community that I'm familiar with, let's say, vicariously. Let me talk to you for a moment and tell you about the town or village of Castropignano: Castropignano in the centre of Italy, in the mountains, in the hills, north of Naples.

Why do I feel comfortable talking about Castropignano? Because I know the people from Castropignano. I know their families, I know their children and I know their grandkids. You see, after the war over half of that village — over half of it — emigrated and settled in Thorold down in Niagara region. Over half the village departed. It was poor. These were hard times for these people and it took courage and a commitment to their future to move en bloc, yes, to a very strange land, a different language, different culture, and they moved to Thorold, Ontario, and the region around Thorold.

As a matter of fact, last Saturday I was at the Club Castropignano over in west Port Robinson when they celebrated the 25th anniversary of their club. We're talking communities here, Bill 98 and communities and the kinds of communities we want, and I'm talking about people from Castropignano because they understand community.

There were several speakers, several of the previous presidents, the first president and their most recent and current one, Jerry Evangelista, and a recurrent theme during the brief addresses by presidents of Club Castropignano was that Canada is such a great country to live in and that Canada and Ontario have been such great

places to raise families and to work in. I got to speak last and I said: "Friends, I agree with you. We're in total agreement that this is a great place to live in. It's a great place to raise family in and to work in."

Now we have to ask the question why. I have no hesitation —

Interjections.

Mr Kormos: The inevitable conclusion I told them, "It's because of you and others like you who came to this country and to this province, bringing with them senses of community that are very much directly under attack by Bill 98 and this government." I was in the kitchen talking to the women. Mrs Scapiletti was there. Mrs Scapiletti, gosh, I've known her for well over 30 years. I've known her since I was a kid. She and her husband ran Scapiletti's supermarket over on the corner of 7th Street and King, and I'm not sure, but I think it used to be Louis Lusina's supermarket before the Scapiletti family purchased it. Louis Lusina, as you know, was the Polish émigré who sided with the Crowland relief workers when they struck for decent relief wages, forced workfare. Louis Lusina —

Interjection.

Mr Kormos: Well, Louis Lusina, I'm sure it's the same store, corner of 7th Street and King. I remember it well as a kid. Mrs Scapiletti hasn't changed a bit in the years. I've gotten older, no two ways about it. But they understood community. They understood neighbourhood and, yes, it was more than a rare time when at the back of the store where the meat counter was I had more than my share of prosciutto and provolone piled high on a thick crusty bun. I'm extremely grateful for the kindness that Mrs Scapiletti showed me then, and I hope that I can repay it to her in the most modest way. She understood community; she still does.

These people from Castropignano and, yes, so many other parts of the world, came here bringing with them strong senses of community, family and neighbourhood. They made sacrifices; we know that. We've talked about that before, you and me, Speaker. The concept of parks to the folks from a poor, small mountain village in Italy was a little alien. The concept of community centres or libraries was somewhat alien. These people were scraping a living out of the dirt, as often as not with their brute power and with great pain.

One of the things they committed themselves to was building communities here in Ontario. The older folks never had a chance to get much of an education in those small villages in Italy. Their lives were interrupted by the war and then by the poverty that followed. But they, as members of communities, be it Thorold or Welland or wherever you want, made investments in community centres, libraries, seniors' centres and parks. They understood this is what makes communities healthy communities and what makes them vital, what makes them alive. They understand that.

They witnessed the orgy of development that has taken place in the province over the course of the last 20 or 30 years and they understand that huge profits are being

made by developers in the course of building those developments. They also understand that those developers, with those huge profits, should be paying their fair share, should be bearing their fair portion of the cost of building communities, building and maintaining parks and libraries and schools and community centres and recreation centres.

I was talking to Mrs Ventresca in the kitchen. She was telling me — I didn't know it was her son, Robert Ventresca. Her son was the MC that night. He's doing his PhD over at U of T, and his sister is a student at Brock University, both of them very, very bright, capable young people. I've known Robert's mother, Mrs Ventresca, all my life. I went and talked to Robert. He's doing his PhD in history. He's done a lot of work on the role of the ethnic community in labour organization and in the labour movement here. Robert is certainly the first generation of his family to ever get a PhD; I tell you that. His mom was so proud of him. She understands community. She understands what it means for people to pay their fair share.

I tell you, she understands that Bill 98 is a display of such largesse on the part of this government to their developer buddies, that there's a whole lot of cash changing hands here, a whole lot of money going to be pocketed.

Bill 98 has as its inevitable result the enhancement of profits for developers, the erosion of community facilities like parks, community centres, art centres, libraries, public services, and as well a transfer of the responsibility that developers should be bearing on to property owners, hardworking people like Mrs Scapiletti and people like Mrs Ventresca and people like the Evangelistas or the Contes or any of the other number of people who were over at Club Castropignano last Saturday night.

They've been paying their fair share and working hard to do it and they've been pleased to do it. It's because they've paid their fair share that Robert Ventresca can be finishing his PhD, when his grandparents tilled the earth back in Castropignano in a small mountain town in Italy, and there wasn't a whole lot of earth to till.

These people have paid their fair share. They understand that this government is telling its developer buddies: "It's in the bag. You developer friends of ours no longer have to pay your fair share. We'll just dump more on to hardworking folks who have worked hard in our factories and on our farms and in our retail stores all of their lives and paid property taxes. We'll just dump more on to them."

This government is saying, "We'll just turn our back on the seniors who rely upon community centres and seniors' centres in community across community to enable them to continue to engage in the social activity of the community."

I'm proud of my friends from Castropignano and I'm proud of what they've contributed to this province. This government should be ashamed of the attack that it's embarking on and the very things —

The Speaker: Thank you. Questions and comments?
1730

Mr Maves: I really want to rise and comment on the member for Welland-Thorold's comments because I take

great exception to some of the comments he's made, just now and prior to this. I'll tell you why.

In Niagara Falls we have a very large Italian community. We have a community that has given a great deal to Niagara. I have many, many friends. I've shared prosciutto in my friends' basements, I've been to many events at Club Italia and I have a great deal of respect for that community.

A lot of the people I know in the Italian community in the Niagara region are in the construction business. They are builders. They build homes and they do it honestly and they do it fairly, people like Domenic DiLalla and Can-Di homes; Felix Pingue with Pingue Construction; Frank Costantino, another well-known builder in Niagara; the Damore family and other families. They are all honest, hardworking people and their families are honest, hardworking people. They've come to this country and they've helped build the country.

For the member opposite previously to get up and say that these people will take payola, that they will put these development charges in their pocket, I think is absolutely shameful. I think the member opposite, when he makes these comments about the Italian community in his riding, should think twice. He should think of what he said earlier tonight that is really quite insulting to some of those people. The folks I know in that business and of that heritage are hardworking, honest people who are fair. They deal on a competitive basis with other builders and other people in the construction industry in my town. I think the member owes them an apology for his earlier comments.

Mr Bradley: Thank you for the opportunity to address the remarks of the member for Welland-Thorold. I was pleased he didn't engage in the bashing that I apparently received in the House the other night from my good friend the member for Niagara Falls who accused me of being pessimistic and a prophet of doom and gloom.

I have such an optimistic view of the future because I see, as I think the member for Welland-Thorold does, that people in this province are beginning to understand the ramifications of the reckless policies of the Harris government. While municipalities are worrying about some of the areas they're going to get their funds from, they are wondering why this government is closing hospitals. I am optimistic that if this government continues this policy, and others begin to see there are people out there who want to see the hospitals kept open, our problems will be solved. I'm a member of the Grantham Optimist club even, which means that I am a person who looks optimistically at the future.

The only thing that makes me pessimistic, I can tell you, is the policy of the Harris government. I hear members get up and extol the virtues of what the brain trust in the Premier's office has thrust upon this government, and that's bound to make anybody pessimistic. I see the hospitals closing, I see home care being cut back, I see hundreds of millions of dollars being taken out of education, and I'm pessimistic about that but I'm optimistic people understand the mistakes this government is making.

Mr Pouliot: Time and time again, the member for Welland-Thorold, Mr Peter Kormos, draws analogies that are filled with validity: the good people from Castropignano this evening, real people, people now residing in the proud Ontario riding of Welland-Thorold, people who have worked so hard and people who are noticing in front of their very eyes an attempt to dismantle what they represent. Imagine a community without libraries, a community with no parks, a community with few essential services, a community where you wouldn't have a recreation centre, where people could not congregate. Would this be advantageous for developers? In the long run they too would lose, for property is location, location, and of course location; nothing else matters. There's no money in wastelands, yet this Tory government is so shortsighted — oh, they're loyal, they're dedicated to their friends. Today, when this bill passes, la payola one more time —

The Speaker: Member for Lake Nipigon, you've crossed the line there. You can't make that accusation.

Mr Pouliot: I will withdraw, Mr Speaker. This is the modern age. Will you accept "direct deposit"?

The Speaker: Member, you know full well that kind of talk is unacceptable. It's not acceptable for Parliament. Certainly a charge like that levelled against an opposition member is something you should think very carefully about. It's very serious.

Mr Pouliot: I'm serious.

The Speaker: I ask that you withdraw your last comment.

Mr Pouliot: I withdraw, Mr Speaker. But do you believe that the savings will be passed along to the consumer, yes or no?

Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East): I'm pleased to respond to comments made by our colleague from Welland-Thorold. Of course his support for my bill this morning will temper my comments, but first I have to put on the record, in deference to our friend from St Catharines, that the second-hand information he had about the debates last night was incorrect. In fact, our colleague from Niagara Falls called you an honourable member and a friend. What he did, though, was quote from a book about David Peterson's years:

"Bradley's peers were accustomed to his pessimism. Colleagues respected Bradley's political nose, but saw him as a perpetual prophet of doom. 'You give him a story, he can tell you everything that's going to go wrong, everything, because he's paranoid,' says one minister. Chaviva Hošek likened him to 'the canaries they used to take down in the mines: when they stopped breathing, you'd know you were dead.'"

Mr John L. Parker (York East): That's what a Liberal minister has called you, Jim.

Mr Gilchrist: You're right. With Liberals you have to know whether that was yesterday's Jim or today's.

Let's get back to the comments made by our friend from Welland-Thorold. He said this was about communities, and we agree, but it's about the reasonable costs that would be expected to increase in a community as a result of new development. We don't think it's appropriate that a

new museum, a new arts centre, a new city hall be funded on the backs of those few homes that are now being built in some communities, more in others.

The fact of the matter is those decisions should be made by all the citizens in a particular community. As you know full well, these are big-ticket expenditures by any community. To suggest that the tens of millions of dollars that would be put into any of those venues should be funded exclusively from new homes is totally inappropriate. That's why we've said the reasonable costs that are directly tied to the creation of a new housing development will continue to be borne on the backs of those homes by the developers. That's why we've brought these changes.

The Speaker: Response, member for Welland-Thorold.

Mr Kormos: I appreciate and indeed enjoy the participation of other members in response to my comments. I've got to tell you, I'm disappointed in the member for Niagara Falls. For him to slander members of his community like that I find most disappointing. I consider it a horrible insult to his constituents and quite frankly to folks across the Niagara region.

I will do my best with some of those same people, to explain to them that the member for Niagara Falls was speaking in a heated moment, that it had been a long day, that he was frustrated, that here he finds himself — I understand. Listen, far be it from me to be critical of somebody who has said things in the heat of the moment. I've done it from time to time myself. The member for Niagara Falls today said things that I'm sure he doesn't really mean. I will do my best to explain to folks down in Niagara that he's carrying a lot of responsibility, he sees the Tories dropping in the polls, he's got to engage himself in a nomination fight with a colleague as a result of the merger of ridings. He's under a great deal of pressure. The problem is, he'd like us to believe that he understands what's going on in the back room. You haven't even seen the hallway to the back room yet, Mr Maves. You're never going to see that back room. You and your colleagues on the back bench don't know the directions to it; you'll never get the directions to it. Jim Bradley is more likely to speak to Guy Giorno than you are.

The Speaker: Further debate?

1740

M. Jean-Marc Lalonde (Prescott et Russell) : C'est avec plaisir que je prends la parole sur ce projet de loi 98, Loi visant à promouvoir la création d'emplois et à accroître la responsabilité des municipalités tout en prévoyant le recouvrement des coûts d'aménagement liés à la croissance.

C'est ce point-là qui inquiète beaucoup de gens. On mentionne «accroître la responsabilité des municipalités», mais ce projet de loi limite la responsabilité des municipalités. Le gouvernement va établir des politiques. Il va avoir ses directives que le conseil municipal va avoir à suivre. Lorsque nous regardons le contenu de ce projet de loi, nous pouvons voir les conséquences que les conseils municipaux vont avoir.

Je regarde la partie II : «Redevances d'aménagement». Lorsque nous regardons la partie II, l'article 3(b), nous voyons que les gouvernements municipaux, les municipalités n'auront pas le contrôle et n'auront pas le pouvoir d'avoir des redevances d'aménagement allant jusqu'à trois unités, ou deux unités additionnelles que nous allons construire.

Mais lorsque nous regardons à fond ce projet de loi, nous nous apercevons que actuellement, les municipalités pourraient être en difficulté. Pourquoi est-ce que je dis «en difficulté»? C'est simple. Nous disons que actuellement, pour avoir le droit d'ajouter deux unités dans une résidence, il n'y aura pas de frais de redevance, mais il n'y a absolument rien dans ce projet de loi qui empêche un individu d'aller chercher un permis de construction, agrandir sa propriété ou sa résidence de 500 ou 600 mille pieds carrés, et l'année suivante retourner pour voir la municipalité et dire, «Maintenant, je veux rajouter deux unités à ma propriété.» La personne, avec ces procédures qu'elle aura suivies, va définitivement être exemptée de payer les redevances.

La même chose s'applique dans le secteur commercial-industriel. Lorsque nous regardons nous disons, jusqu'à l'heure, dans 50 % des agrandissements d'une industrie ou dans le secteur commercial les redevances ne s'appliquent pas. Mais encore là rien n'empêche un industriel de procéder avec des agrandissements de son édifice et, l'année suivante, peut-être même six mois plus tard, demander pour faire reconnaître le 50 % qu'il aura fait construire en deux ou trois étapes qui va être exempté des redevances. Je dis, rendus à ce point-là deux ans ou trois ans, nous pouvons agrandir notre édifice de 100 % sur la grandeur actuelle et être exemptés de payer ces redevances.

Qu'advient-il aux services municipaux qui sont en place? Souvent, nous devons voir à l'agrandissement de tuyaux maîtres d'eau, à l'agrandissement d'égouts sanitaires, à l'agrandissement d'égouts pluviaux, mais avec ce projet de loi la municipalité, tous les payeurs de taxes, seront appelés à défrayer les coûts.

Je sais que le gouvernement a reçu beaucoup de pression depuis le dépôt de ce projet de loi, qui était fait le 25 novembre 1996, voilà déjà plus qu'un an. Mais nous voyons la mairesse de Mississauga, M^{me} Hazel McCallion, qui avait dit, «Si le gouvernement veut mettre d'avant ce projet de loi, nous allons geler le développement au complet dans Mississauga.» Nous avons aussi le maire de Markham, M. Cousens, qui avait mentionné que ce projet de loi pourrait vouloir dire des augmentations de taxes municipales allant jusqu'à 31 %.

Nous nous apercevons que ce gouvernement, encore une fois, comme il l'a fait à plusieurs occasions, va trop vite. On ne prend pas le temps d'étudier les conséquences qui peuvent survenir.

Je regarde tous les points. Après le 24 mars 1997, nous avons eu des audiences publiques à Ottawa, à St Catharines et un peu partout dans la province. Mais le gouvernement a réalisé que vraiment il y aurait des conséquences majeures. Donc, le 24 mars, un communiqué

avait été envoyé à tous les médias. On nous disait que le gouvernement regardait la possibilité d'apporter un amendement et de retirer le 10 % que toutes les municipalités étaient obligés de défrayer dans la construction de routes, dans l'installation de tuyaux d'eau, d'égout et tout ça. Le gouvernement est revenu sur ses positions à ce temps-là.

Les «développeurs» étaient tous enchantés de la position du gouvernement. Mais juste hier, nous avons rencontré les entrepreneurs de routes et ils nous ont dit : «Nous sommes très, très déçus de ce gouvernement. Il revient sur ses positions aussitôt qu'il y a des pressions.» Donc, le communiqué avait été émis le 24 mars 1997 et le 25 avril 1997 — un mois et un jour après l'émission de ce communiqué — le gouvernement a décidé de retirer cette responsabilité additionnelle qu'on avait donnée aux municipalités.

Maintenant c'est vrai que les municipalités n'auront pas à défrayer le 10 % des coûts de construction de routes, d'installation de tuyaux maîtres d'eau, le câble, le téléphone, un peu de tout. Le téléphone, anciennement, était toujours payé par Bell Canada ou encore par les câblodistributeurs, mais aujourd'hui on nous a retirés.

La chose qui m'inquiète beaucoup, c'est que les municipalités, qui sont en pleine croissance — dont ma propre municipalité, Rockland, avec une croissance de 38,4 % de 1991 à 1996 — se voient dans l'obligation maintenant aussi avec les fusions des municipalités — nous regardons la possibilité de construire de nouveaux hôtels de ville, de nouvelles bibliothèques, mais les payeurs de taxe vont être obligés de défrayer le coût au complet. Aucun argent ne pourra prévenir les frais de développement ou les redevances qui auront été perçus par les «développeurs».

Cela inquiète beaucoup les gens et les municipalités. Le point que j'ai soulevé tout à l'heure, ça pourrait vouloir dire un manque à gagner de plusieurs milliers de dollars pour les municipalités parce que actuellement, avec les redevances qui sont en place, avec le projet de loi qui a été mis en place en 1989, les municipalités peuvent recourir aux frais de redevances pour toute unité additionnelle qu'on construit dans une maison.

Mais ce projet de loi va éliminer le pouvoir des municipalités d'aller chercher des redevances pour deux unités additionnelles ainsi que pour les développements industriels et commerciaux. Comme je l'ai dit tout à l'heure, nous pouvons jouer une «game» avec ça, comme on le dit souvent. On pourrait jouer un rôle en disant : «Oui, je vais agrandir mon industrie de 25 %, de 40 %. L'année prochaine, je vais l'agrandir d'un autre 40 % et je vais m'exempter de payer les frais de développement.»

Encore là, on dit toujours qu'on va donner la responsabilité aux municipalités. Mais toujours avec les mains liées, nous ne pouvons pas faire ce que nous voulons. Avec tout le délaissement que nous connaissons — en anglais nous disons «downloading» — depuis tout récemment, tôt hier matin même, j'ai appris que dans le passé les municipalités bénéficiaient de 75 % des revenus du programme de santé publique. Maintenant, on nous a dit qu'on va retirer le 75 % et que les municipalités vont payer 100 %.

J'ai trouvé dans une autre section aussi que le gouvernement payait 100 % pour certains services de santé publique. Maintenant, les responsabilités vont être à 100 % chez les municipalités.

Beaucoup de choses surviennent. Nous regardons la bibliothèque. Quelle municipalité peut se permettre une bibliothèque dans sa municipalité aujourd'hui ? C'est impossible. J'ai toujours dit qu'une municipalité sans bibliothèque, c'est une ville morte.

Je peux aussi dire qu'avec les coupures du projet de loi 160, nous allons avoir besoin plus que jamais dans toutes les municipalités des bibliothèques puisque les conseils scolaires ne pourront plus donner les services de bibliothèques à la journée longue, 16 heures par jour. Nous allons avoir recours aux services de bibliothèques municipaux. Mais avec ce projet de loi, encore là on enlève tout pouvoir aux municipalités d'aller chercher les fonds nécessaires afin de défrayer les coûts de construction de bibliothèques.

Je sais que mon temps est presque écoulé, mais avant d'arriver avec la troisième lecture — nous sommes en ce moment à discuter en troisième lecture — on doit revenir, comme nous l'avons fait à quelques reprises, sur les positions afin de s'assurer que le secteur rural est aussi bien servi que le secteur urbain.

1750

The Speaker: Questions and comments.

Ms Martel: I thank the member for Prescott and Russell for his comments here this afternoon. He is quite correct. You have to look at Bill 98, frankly, as just an extension of the download that this current government is also proceeding with. It's very clear that on January 1 municipalities are going to have to assume a whole set of new responsibilities for new services and the associated costs. Those costs will include increased costs for social assistance, public transit, social housing, child care, ambulance services, ferry services, some provincial highways, and on and on the list goes.

Despite whatever the Minister of Municipal Affairs has tried to say to municipal leaders across the province, the fact is in my community, and every other, this is not revenue-neutral. The regional municipality of Sudbury is looking at a \$48-million increase in costs as a direct result of what this Conservative government is doing. They do not remain convinced by any stretch that any of the funds the government has talked about, around which the government has refused to provide any criteria for those who want to apply, are going to help them either on a short- or long-term basis.

Added on to all of those costs, which municipalities right across the province are going to have to deal with beginning January 1, we now have this bill which now says that municipalities will have to pick up 10% of the costs of new development in new areas for libraries, recreation centres etc.

I ask people who are watching, how is a municipality like mine, which is already going to be hit with a \$48-million increase as of January 1, ever going to be able to afford in those new areas to try and provide those services

which really are an important part of the community? The fact is that my municipality and every other won't. This is just one more extension, one more download by this government, and the people who are going to benefit are the developers because there's no guarantee in the bill that they're going to lower the cost of housing as a result of these reduced development charges costs.

Mr Parker: I listened with considerable interest to the comments from my friend from Prescott and Russell. I did my best to listen to them in the original French. I had trouble keeping up with his speed, but he spoke very clearly and I was able to follow most of his remarks.

I was particularly grateful for the light he cast on one point that has been raised in issue earlier today that has to do with the government attitude in bringing this bill forward. It was suggested by one commentator earlier this afternoon that this bill has been pushed through and that the minister has not been consulting adequately on the subject matter and has not listened to anyone's comments with respect to this bill. I'm very pleased my friend from Prescott and Russell has set the record straight on that matter because what I heard him say is that the bill has gone through many changes over the course of time since it was introduced in the fall of 1996.

What I heard my friend from Prescott and Russell say was that as different groups have met with the minister and applied their particular perspective, the bill has been adjusted and amended, and the thinking behind it and the thinking in the ministry and the policy development and underpinnings of the bill have been adjusted, have grown and have developed themselves in response to the advice that has been received from these various groups.

I think that quite accurately reflects the history this bill has followed over the year it has been in the works since it was introduced. It has been a matter of consultation, of meeting with different groups, of hearing their concerns and trying to address those concerns in the final draft of the bill.

The amount of development that is currently under way in this province shows that there is great optimism in this province for what benefits legislation such as this bill will bring to builders and to homeowners.

Mr Caplan: I would like to congratulate my colleague the member for Prescott-Russell for his very eloquent and insightful comments. Members more senior than I in this place know that the member is a former mayor, so his words should carry great weight in this assembly and I would hope that the Minister of Municipal Affairs would listen very intently to the words from the member. He has extensive municipal experience.

In fact, GTA-wide mayors commented on Bill 98 and set some principles which should be followed when you're going to make decisions regarding development charges. I want to let all members of the assembly understand what the mayors said.

They said, "New growth must continue to pay for itself," a very simple and very interesting and sensible proposal. They said, "Municipalities should have the right to establish, but be required to defend, reasonable, sus-

tainable and cost-effective levels of services and to set the appropriate development charges to pay for those services." Under this piece of legislation they can't do that. The minister is going to micromanage that.

They said, "Development charges should be based on reasonably anticipated future levels of services and expenditures as determined by appropriate underlying studies." The minister cannot point to any underlying studies as the rationale for this bill. The mayors know their communities; they can.

The fourth principle was, "Development charge practices inconsistent with the spirit of the legislation are not supported by municipalities and should be dealt with accordingly." The fifth one was, "Development charge legislation must achieve a high degree of administrative simplicity." Simplicity? Bill 98 is so convoluted there is no simplicity.

The members would do well to listen to the advice of the —

The Speaker: Questions and comments.

Mr Silipo: Briefly, let me just express appreciation for the comments made by the member for Prescott-Russell. He pointed out very clearly and as thoroughly as one can in 10 minutes, which is all the time that was available to him, how this is linked very much to the rest of the downloading activity this government has undertaken and how what this is going to mean at the end of the day is that there will be people paying higher property taxes if current services are to be maintained; and that there won't be, as we've been saying all along, any guarantee that as a result of lower development charges people buying new homes will actually pay less than they're paying now.

There is no guarantee of those cost savings to developers being passed through, but on the other hand, as a result of the changes the government has made, there will still be some burden on the property taxpayers to pick up through the property taxes, many of the services like libraries, like community centres, that will be needed in the new growth areas. That is partly what continues to be very wrong about this bill and the general direction this government is taking.

The Speaker: The member has two minutes to respond.

Mr Lalonde: I'm going to give those two minutes in English. I commend the member for East York for having his earphone on while I was giving my speech in French, but I don't know if the minister had his earphone on.

Definitely this bill is going to have an impact on the rural municipalities. Most rural municipalities for many years were looking at the possibility of having development charges and finally they agreed to have development charges, but when they saw the clause I referred to in section 2, that you will not be able to charge for the second and third additional unit within your house and also anything under 50% of the expansion of your businesses — the people are in favour of not charging any additional expenses for the expansion of the businesses, but there is nothing in the bill that prevents someone from going ahead within two or three years to expand 100% his business or industrial.

There's another thing. The municipalities in the rural areas will have additional downloading because they will have no control over the development charges in a certain way, because the policies are going to be established by this government. I'm just looking at small Nation, the new amalgamation of four municipalities which became Nation. Their increase in taxes, which was in the paper yesterday, will be \$2.1 million. I wonder if the minister is going to have a cheque written to this municipality for \$2.1 million.

This is the effect of all those bills you are putting through, without consulting the rural areas, that could affect these small municipalities.

The Speaker: Further debate? Seeing none, Mr Gilchrist has moved third reading of Bill 98. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour please say "aye."

All those opposed please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

"Pursuant to standing order 28(g), I would like to request the vote on Bill 98 be deferred until December 8, 1997": the chief government whip.

It now being just past 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 6:30 of the clock tonight.

The House adjourned at 1802.

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No. 256B

N° 256B

ISSN 1180-2987

**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

First Session, 36th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Première session, 36^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Thursday 4 December 1997

Jeudi 4 décembre 1997

Speaker
Honourable Chris Stockwell

Président
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

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Publié par l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 4 December 1997

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 4 décembre 1997

The House met at 1830.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

HOUSE SITTINGS

Mr Turnbull moved government notice of motion number 55:

That, notwithstanding standing order 6(a), the House shall continue to meet commencing Monday, December 15, 1997, until Thursday, December 18, 1997;

That pursuant to standing order 9(c), the House shall meet from 6:30 pm to 9:30 pm on December 15 and 16, 1997; and

That pursuant to standing order 9(e)(i), the House shall meet from 6:30 pm to midnight on December 17 and 18, 1997, for the purpose of conducting government business, at which time the Speaker shall adjourn the House without motion until the next sessional day.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): The Chair recognizes the member for York Mills.

Applause.

Interjection.

Hon David Turnbull (Minister without Portfolio): Thank you, Marion, for that generosity. I know we always would want to extend the same to you.

I'm very pleased to rise tonight to debate the government calendar motion. I want to put this in a little bit of perspective. We have come from a period of probably the most intense year in terms of the number of hours this Legislature, I suspect, has ever sat in history. It's been a very busy year and it's been a very challenging agenda. There have been a lot of promises that the government is delivering on that it made during the last election. It has called for some tremendously tough decisions on the part of the government. We have faced significant obstruction from the opposition which has demonstrated itself in several ways.

I'd like to quote from a doctoral paper that I glanced at recently. It states, "Legitimate dissent becomes obstruction when it serves no other purpose than to delay, when it is not exposing weakness or moulding opinion, but simply preventing legislation being passed." That was written by C.E.S. Franks in The Parliament of Canada.

One way to measure obstruction would be to look at the number of bills passed as a percentage of the number of bills introduced. "If the percentage were less than 100%, a prima facie case would be made that the opposition had

been successful at obstructing the government's agenda." This is lifted directly from a doctoral paper by Chris Charlton, in fact the wife of a former member of this House who sat in the NDP government.

I'd like to compare some of the statistics we have with regard to the amount of debate on both second reading and third reading. When we look back to the average amount of debate time on second reading between the years 1975 and 1990, there was less than half an hour; in the 35th Parliament there was three hours and 53 minutes; and in the 36th Parliament, six hours is the average amount of second reading debate time.

Let us move on to the question of third reading debate time. Between 1975 and 1990 the average amount of debate time was less than 15 minutes; in the 35th Parliament, 68 minutes; and now in the 36th Parliament, 2.17 hours of debate.

I think it's instructive that everybody understands what has happened. There has been a concerted effort by the opposition to stop the agenda of a legitimately elected government, a government that was elected with a majority of the members in this place, on a very clearly stated platform, a platform which was known as the Common Sense Revolution. Unusually, this platform was put out one year before the last election. There has never been a case in Canadian history, to the best of my knowledge, where a political party has put forward an agenda that was available to the previous government because it was put out during their term, a year before the election. We encouraged the opposition to embrace many of the measures to make Ontario competitive again. Competitive means that we will have jobs for our children and that we won't find that our children are driven from this province, that there will be a prosperous future and that we can protect all of those services that Ontarians are used to.

I want to review some of the challenges this government faced when it first came into office. In 1990, when the NDP came into office, they found that the previous government had misstated the severity of the recession that was coming on and had misstated the fiscal situation of that government. The Liberals went to the electorate in 1990 suggesting that they were going to have a balanced budget. In fact, the year prior to that they had stated that they'd had a balanced budget and the interesting facts in the matter are that the Liberal government had projected in its budget document a deficit in that year of \$550 million. In fact, they received an unusual payment from the feds because the economy was so booming in the whole of Canada that they hadn't anticipated the amount

of money that would come in. They received an unusual payment from the federal government of \$888 million.

One would assume that given the fact that the Liberal government of the day had projected a \$550-million deficit, then they would have had a very significant surplus. In point of fact they had a surplus in the area, if I remember correctly, of about \$90 million. How they had achieved that, notwithstanding the fact that they got this large payment from the federal government, was that they had used techniques called pre-flow where they had taken revenue that should have been attributed to the following year and moved it forward into that year and they had moved expenditures that they should have recognized in that fiscal year to the following year.

The NDP government came into power with a mandate that they believed in, and while I respectfully disagree with the NDP, I will say that at least one knows where the NDP stands on many issues. I don't happen to subscribe to those views, but I recognize that the NDP holds those values to be dear and is consistent about them. One never knows where the Liberals stand on any particular issue. But the NDP found that, when they opened up the books, they had a deficit in excess of \$2.5 billion.

In fairness, the NDP's Treasurer, Floyd Laughren, admitted that there were some charges they were taking which would not necessarily have had to have been taken, and that was as a result of some of their election promises. But notwithstanding that, they would have had a significant deficit in that year. The NDP faced many challenges and, within bounds, I would say they made an honest effort to try and address those challenges. We believe they made some substantial mistakes and, had they taken the advice of the Conservative third party at the time, they would not have got into some of the difficulties they faced.

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However, moving to the last election, in 1995, this government came in to an accumulated debt of around \$100 billion. I have to repeat that slowly: \$100 billion. I certainly find that I still have to write it down to count the number of zeros, it's such a mind-boggling figure. The government of Ontario, based on the budget the NDP had set for that fiscal year that we came into government, was spending at the rate of \$1.2 million an hour more than we were taking in in revenue. Ontario was in decline. Ontario, which had led Confederation, was at a point where we had lost a net 10,000 jobs in the years the NDP had been in power.

There's no doubt about it, the NDP faced many challenges which were of a worldwide nature. There was a significant recession on. Nobody could have calculated the depth of that recession, and I fully acknowledge that. However, many of the actions they took exacerbated the problem to the extent that we had a government which was going further and further into debt.

Let's think about debt. When you're talking about government deficits and debt, so many of the population don't know the difference between deficit and debt. They think when you get rid of the deficit, you've suddenly cleaned up the problem. No, that's the amount more you've spent each year than you've taken in. But what

successive governments of all three parties have done is put that on the credit card for our children to pay.

One would say, "Oh, it's just simple; you just work away at that," but unfortunately our tax rates were so uncompetitive that we had gone from being one of the most competitive administrations in North America to one of the least competitive administrations. When you took the summation of all the taxes and all the burdens and all the charges that were put on to employers together, when you looked at the total picture, we were one of the most heavily taxed administrations in the whole of North America, and that was what was making the situation of job loss even worse.

In putting forward our plan for the revitalization of the Ontario economy, we were very careful to go around the whole of the province and listen to people in all walks of life as to what their solutions would be. Clearly, being a political party — we are a Conservative Party — we would place more weight on some solutions that we heard than others, but we heard a full spectrum of problems and solutions.

We put forward, as I've said, an election document called the Common Sense Revolution a year before the election and we committed to cutting the provincial portion of income taxes by 30% over our first term in office. Why did we choose 30%? It wasn't a number where we stuck our finger in our mouth and felt the air and said, "What feels good?" It was a number that was arrived at to very closely approximate the lowest income tax rate in Canada, which was that of Alberta. That was how we arrived at that number; it wasn't happenstance.

The Common Sense Revolution said we would cut government spending. In point of fact, in that 10-year period since the last time the Conservatives had been the government, spending had more than doubled in this province. Had we taken the spending of the last Conservative government and adjusted it for inflation and increase in population, we would have had a budget which would have been somewhat like \$8 billion a year less than the one we took over. But we found we had a very profligate Liberal Party that didn't come across an expenditure they didn't like. They spent millions upon millions of dollars on advertising.

I am fascinated to see my good friend Mr Bradley, the member for St Catharines, here tonight. I'm sure he will be commenting on this. I have heard him on so many occasions criticizing this government for the fact that we have taken paid advertising to explain something to the public which would go beyond what the press would put down in any interpretation, to give the unbridled truth as to what the government was doing. Every party in Canada that is a governing party spends money on advertising. That is a fact. The NDP did it, the Liberals did it and the previous Conservatives did it. We were very clear: We were determined to cut the cost of government, and the amount of money we are spending on paid advertising is substantially less than the Liberal government and the NDP spent. However, the Liberals were the ones who spent the most money.

We took over the government and we said that we were going to balance the budget by the budget year 2000-01. When we first came out with our document, the Common Sense Revolution, we had said we would balance the budget one year earlier than that and in later editions of that same document we adjusted it to reflect the new situation in Ontario. We had a choice. We could have gone ahead, barged ahead and said, "Oh, we'll balance it in three years," as the NDP did, notwithstanding the fact that they had added more to the debt of this province than any other party in history. And we didn't do the four years that the Liberals, in typical form, did.

The NDP, in fairness, said they weren't going to make any tax cuts. We respect them for that. We don't agree it was the right approach, because in the first place you added taxes and so did the Liberals. We remember: 33 tax increases from the Liberal government and 32 from the NDP. You two opposition parties were the genesis of the tax problem we faced in this province. Nevertheless, we said we were going to balance it in five years.

The Liberals had criticized the Common Sense Revolution for that full year. They said: "It will never work. You shouldn't cut taxes. You shouldn't do all of these things." Then guess what? I know this is going to be a surprise to you folks, but just very shortly before the election, when they realized that this document was having an attraction, they said, "Oh, we'll cut taxes too, but we'll only cut them by half of what you're doing and we'll spend more money in other areas." Well, if spending money was the criterion for a successful province, we would be the most successful administration in the whole world because we are among the very highest spenders in almost every category one cares to mention.

We came forward with a platform where we said we would cut provincial income taxes by an average of 30%. In fact, the final plan that was worked out gives a higher-than-30% provincial tax reduction to people at the low end of the income spectrum and the people at the high end get less than 30%, but on average the cuts we're putting through are about 31%. To date, we have delivered on 22.4% of the tax reductions, so we are already significantly into the plan we laid out to balance the budget.

We took over a deficit which that year was projected to be I think \$11.3 billion and we're down today to about \$6.6 billion. That's a \$4.7-billion-a-year reduction in the amount we're spending more than we're taking in. The tax reductions have been completely self-funding, because contrary to the naysayers, revenues have gone up as a direct result of the fact that we have cut taxes, and so the plan is working.

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Turning to other areas of the economy, in the health care field we made a commitment that we would not cut health care spending. To be precise, the commitment that was made, if I remember correctly, was that the NDP said they were going to freeze spending at the current level, \$17.4 billion that year, which was exactly the same commitment we made. The Liberals, on the other hand, said that they were going to freeze spending at \$17 billion.

They've never told us where they were going to get that \$300 million in savings, but I'll tell you where the cuts were made.

There were cuts made by a Liberal government, but it was the federal Liberal government that cut transfers to Ontario with respect to health care and education, by some \$2.4 billion in the fiscal year. Our government has made up that \$2.4 billion, and then on top of that we have added some more money. We are spending this year at the rate of \$18.5 billion, substantially more than was being spent when we took government. Part of that money is not ongoing funding, part of it is restructuring money, because the health care system in this province needs to be restructured, and I believe whichever government was in power would be dealing with this reality today, because Ontario is somewhat behind the eight ball in terms of restructuring the health care system.

When we go back 20 years or so ago, we had a system which was heavily oriented around long hospital stays. Today, with less-intrusive surgery, we know that people can often have day surgery and go home. The challenge is to move the money out of the bricks and mortar and into the services which support people in the community. As our population gets older, they will need more and more services in the community, and we have announced many initiatives in the area of health care where we are reinvesting savings that we are achieving out of the closure of hospitals.

The two previous governments had criticized the earlier Conservative government for closing a few hospital beds. Then the Liberals, who had been very vociferous in their opposition to hospital beds being closed, came in and closed a significant number of beds. Then the NDP came in. Of course, we had been peeling them off the ceiling in terms of hospital bed closures, but — I know you'll find this hard to believe — they came in and they closed more hospital beds, so we had the situation where by the end of the NDP's mandate, one third of all of the hospital beds in this province had been closed. They hadn't made the wrong decision; the only mistake they had made is they hadn't done the next piece of the puzzle. In fairness to the NDP, they had contemplated the next piece of the puzzle.

The next piece of the puzzle was that the NDP — I hope that my colleague across the floor recognizes that I am giving you credit for the things I believe you did right — had asked the district health councils around the province to do a study as to how hospitals should be restructured. A proposal came in from the district health councils, of which the majority of all the members were NDP appointments, which recommended that a group of hospitals, in Metro particularly — since I'm a Metro member, I'll dwell particularly on that, but in fact they recommended hospital closures across the province —

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I want to hear your speech on MVA.

Hon Mr Turnbull: I will get to that, my friend.

The recommendation was that they should close I believe one less hospital than the final recommendation made by the hospital restructuring commission. When our

government started, we recognized that there was the potential for political conflict in terms of which hospitals would be closed. We felt that it was more appropriate that these decisions be made completely out of the hands of politicians, so we appointed the hospital restructuring commission under Dr Duncan Sinclair, and Dr Duncan Sinclair is from Queen's University and a very eminent academic who has some considerable knowledge of the field.

The recommendation that the hospital restructuring commission came forward with was that, yes indeed, there were substantially too many hospitals in Metro. They were concerned that one third of all the beds were empty, because this gave an undue burden of administration that was soaking up money which should have been spent and reinvested into health care and delivering health care in the new paradigm of a lot more assistance in the home.

One of the first things our government did was announce the doubling of the number of magnetic resonance imaging machines in the province, and to date approximately half of that doubling has already been delivered and is up and running around the province. This is a non-intrusive method of determining certain illnesses, which can significantly help the medical community in determining the nature of the illness and in diagnosing the problems. That was the situation in health care.

If one were to start with a blank piece of paper and design a health care system anywhere in the world today, I suspect we would not have exactly the same configuration. Certainly you wouldn't place all of the hospitals in downtown areas, but remember that these grew up as independent institutions and most of the population was concentrated in the downtown area. Today we have a vastly dispersed population, and with immigration and new housing moving out into the outskirts we have to make sure that health care is available to all the people. Indeed, retirees who live across the province in some fairly distant places are going to have to have the availability of renal dialysis, and we have increased the number of renal dialysis units around the province to make sure that long distances are not having to be undertaken by those people who need that assistance.

That really gives you a sense of what's happening with health care. We have recognized the good work which was done by the NDP in terms of getting ready for hospital restructuring and we're moving ahead with it in a non-political way. I recognize that my friends across the floor would like to politicize this, but the fact is we have said we're not going to do favours for members; we are going to make sure that the care goes where it needs to go, and that is where the population is. That is what Dr Duncan Sinclair is doing, and I think he is doing a fine job.

There can be some times that frankly as a politician I cringe a little and think, "Gee, for political purposes, it would be nice if they did" fill in the blank, but the fact is we owe it to the taxpayers and the patients of Ontario to make sure that the money is spent where it deserves to be spent, where it needs to be spent.

When we move to the area of education, we are now spending more on education than we have ever done in the history of this province. We're spending at the provincial level substantially more money, and most of that money is actually being soaked up in the pension plan. This is a very interesting story. The NDP, during its trials and tribulations, went to the teachers' unions and said, "We don't want to make that contribution we've been making towards the pension plan for a while. Guess what? We'll have a three-year holiday," which just conveniently took it beyond the next election — I think by then they already knew that they wouldn't have to pay the piper — and then they committed to freezing in time the amount of money that was supposedly underfunded in the pension plan, an \$8.5-billion unfunded liability, and they committed to a regime where they would pay for that at an accelerated rate for the 30-year period. So this year we are spending on the teachers' pension plan some \$1.1 billion. Actuaries have indicated that, based upon the experience in the fund, there is no reason to be putting that amount of money in. Correct payment this year should be in the region of about \$550 million still a substantial amount of money.

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Now let us be very clear in case any teachers are watching and think that in some way we're trying to chisel away at the money in their pension plan. There is no suggestion of that because they have what is known as a defined benefit plan. Therefore, they cannot get less, but they also cannot get more. If the pension plan does exceedingly well and this amount of money goes in and builds up as a surplus, the teachers cannot take any benefit from it. It is just money that is not available for the education system. This was the deal our friends in the NDP made in the last government. So we have this challenge.

We are spending today the second-highest amount on education in Canada. However, we find the fact that some of the school boards are being remarkably profligate and others have been making do with less money. I look across the floor and I'm reminded of the North York School Board which a few years ago had the great embarrassment when it came out that they were having shrimp for dinner, the school trustees were having shrimp dinners. That's what the money was being spent on.

I challenge anybody to go into any school board office. They will find extremely expensive, elegant furniture in the school board offices, wonderful school board offices, but the money is not being spent in the classroom. We made a commitment that we will adhere to, and that is we will not cut classroom spending. However, we are sending a message very clearly with our new funding formula that those school boards that are profligate will not have the money to spend on all of these silly frills. They have to spend it in the classroom because there will be benchmarks set all across the province.

This, by the way, is something which is done in many of the provinces today. There's nothing unusual that we did in Bill 160. We are already in the situation in Canada, in many provinces, where money is being allocated by the province and that's exactly what we're going to do.

Successive governments have had recommendations from all kinds of commissions to do this, but most people have been too weak-kneed to do it. Quite frankly, when you're in the situation that you have to make tough decisions, guess what? Politically, it's very easy to run. You need to have the guts to say, "No, our young children deserve better," and that's what we're going to do.

So our agenda in this House this year has been correcting huge past mistakes that have been made by governments, and we are determined to deliver on all of our promises to the extent that in the next election we're going to be able to look people in the eye and say: "Do you know what? We did all of the things we said we were going to do and you vote on the basis of that." Some people may not like all of the things we've done, but we told them a year before the election.

We recognize that in this province, with three parties, you don't get elected typically with a majority. In fact, there has been no majority government in living memory in this province. The NDP was elected with 37.8 % of the electorate and they had a majority government. They did some things which I know my party didn't agree with, and when you got some sense out of the Liberals as to where they stood on the matter, they said they didn't agree with it. They never said what their alternative plan was. I remember so well when Premier Rae got up and said: "Where do you stand, Liberals? What would you do? The Conservatives have already told us what they would do. We're not going to do it because we don't agree, but they very clearly" — Bob Rae said he recognized that we had an alternative plan.

Who knows where the Liberals are on any day of the week. It is not surprising that in the last election, we had people dogging the leader of their party in great big slippers going flip-flop, flip-flop.

Interjection.

Hon Mr Turnbull: My good friend, Mr Phillips, has suggested that I should comment on the question of reassessment. I remember that in the 1990 election his election platform was he wanted market value assessment. I, on the other hand, fought against market value assessment and I make no bones about it. The NDP brought in a bill when they, by surprise, got elected. The Liberals had already said that they were going to implement market value assessment, and when the NDP came in they said they were going to implement it too, on the basis of 1988 assessments, the year of the highest level of values. I had opposed it and I make no bones about it.

The plan which we have brought in is a modified plan. It is still based — I want to be very clear, I'm admitting — it is still based on a value of the building, but it is significantly modified over the Liberal and the NDP plan because it is not based on the 1988 assessment and it will be updated each year. As well as that, it will mitigate a lot of the very serious problems. But it is not market value assessment, I emphasize, because had it been market value assessment, the shifts would have been too large and would have been unfair.

Mr Phillips is very interesting; he's a typical Liberal because he was in favour of market value assessment when they were the government, and now he's against it, because I saw him voting against the bill when we brought it forward and yet he says it's the same. Can anybody figure out what that means? He says it's the same, but he voted against it, and I have election literature saying that he was in favour of it. It's very, very difficult to understand.

Perhaps what Mr Phillips doesn't like is the modifications that we've made to it which make it a much fairer plan and will not drive the railways out of Toronto as a result of the heavy burden that is placed on railway land because there will be a standardized fee based on utilities. Let's be very clear about this: The Liberal and the NDP plan was that they would tax railway rights of way at the value of the average of the adjacent property, which would mean that if a railway went through Rosedale, they would be paying Rosedale residential rates. This is how silly their plan was. We have addressed those very serious concerns. I wish that I had won the argument against going on something based upon value, but I didn't. But frankly, I'm man enough to say this: I'm not inconsistent as my friends on the Liberal benches are.

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): I'm not. No, it's Al that's not consistent. He said he wasn't against it, now he's in it.

Hon Mr Turnbull: I see Mr Phillips seems to have a little bit of trouble with the fact that he was in favour of it, then he voted against it even though he says it's the same. Try and figure out which of those positions you belong to.

We're moving ahead very well with our plan to revitalize the economy. We now have in Ontario the best job creation in the whole of Canada: About 60% of all of the net new jobs are occurring in Ontario even though only 37% of the population is in Ontario. Isn't that a change from the days when we lost a net 10,000 jobs in Ontario, even when other provinces were gaining jobs?

Mr Phillips: There are more people out of work now.

Hon Mr Turnbull: My good friend Mr Phillips, the member for Scarborough-Agincourt, says there are more people out of work. In point of fact, what happens is an interesting effect. When the economy turns around, you have what is known as a higher participation rate. I suspect I should go back to the things Mr Phillips was saying when he was in government because he has selective memory as to how he expresses things. There is a participation rate, and as people see jobs being created then they move to want to get a job. So they come forward again. There is significant job creation in Ontario. In fact, Ontario is leading the OECD in job creation; Ontario and Alberta have led this year. It's probably just coincidence, of course, that we have Conservative governments in those two provinces. Next year, Ontario and Newfoundland are set to lead the job creation.

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Our agenda is moving along very well despite all of the tactics of the opposition parties to delay: useless tactics, tactics which instead of adding to the debate have gone

into all kinds of very poor displays where we were sitting overnight for 10 days, not debating, mind you, but a silly tactic in terms of reading a motion which was very clearly a delaying tactic as opposed to something which added to the quality of the debate.

I think it's important that we deal with the motion as quickly as possible. I've outlined what our government has done. I'm proud of the achievements of our government. It's been difficult for members of all parties because we have all been here for a long period of time. I do apologize if I have woken up some of my friends on the Liberal benches. I've no doubt that as the debate continues tonight, I will hear back — the boomerang effect — but I look forward to what they have to say.

I think it's in the best interests of everybody that we complete our agenda and that we move forward and then that we have time in our constituencies, all of our members, speaking to the people out there and doing the other very important part of our job.

With that, Mr Speaker, I will thank you very much for the opportunity to debate.

Applause.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Bradley: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. I'm assuming that applause I heard was for your calling me to speak at this time, and I appreciate the strong support of the members on the government side who now recognize that I've been fighting on their behalf to help them wrestle control from the unelected advisers to the Premier, the people we call the whiz kids.

I want to indicate that I am sharing my time with Gerry Phillips, the member for Scarborough-Agincourt. He'll have an opportunity to correct the misimpressions that have been created as a result of Mr Turnbull's speech this evening.

I want to congratulate David Turnbull, first of all, on now having the title —

Interjection.

Mr Bradley: I'm being heckled while I'm trying to do this by the member for Rexdale.

By the way, I should say before I actually congratulate you, to the member for Rexdale, that none other than Gary Carr's mother lives in his riding. Mrs Carr watches the channel all the time. I want to say hello to Mrs Carr and say that she should be very proud of her son, who, despite the browbeating that was being administered by members of the government caucus, had the intestinal fortitude to vote for his constituents and against Mike Harris and the whiz kids on Bill 152, which is the bill that downloads onerous financial responsibilities from the provincial government to the local government. I know that Gary Carr's mother is proud of him. She should be proud of him for that, along with Toni Skarica, who also, unlike many of the other government members, decided that he would vote on behalf of his constituents. I want to congratulate both of those individuals. I watched what happened that day. I watched them go over. I saw the member for Brantford, Mr Johnson, come down —

Interjection.

Mr Bradley: I know you're surprised. I hear surprise expressed that he would be here to do this, but he was over to see in this case Gary Carr. I saw a couple of other members around. My friend Bill Murdoch, who fulminated out in the hallway about how he was going to vote against the government, turned out to be a good government man when it came down to the vote. But he was talking to Gary Carr and several others. You'll recall this, Mr Speaker. Then I saw the Honourable Cam Jackson and Mr Trevor Pettit, the member for Hamilton-Mountain. They were over trying to persuade Toni Skarica that he should vote with the government and not with his conscience.

They were the only two. I knew there were other people in the government caucus who were beside themselves over this unwise policy which would add in future years to the tax burden of local municipalities. I wanted to say this because I know that Mrs Carr, who lives in Rexdale —

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke-Rexdale): Etobicoke-Rexdale.

Mr Bradley: They want to say Etobicoke-Rexdale.

Mr Phillips: Etobicoke is gone.

Mr Bradley: Etobicoke is gone. I would like to say Etobicoke, but under the megacity bill, Etobicoke doesn't exist any more. All the members for Etobicoke except the Speaker voted to abolish Etobicoke and have one huge megalopolis in Toronto. That's why I say to Mrs Carr, it's quite all right to refer to herself as a resident of Rexdale.

I want to deal first of all with the overall style of this government, because I know that all the people who sit in the Speaker's chair are worried about the changes to the rules of this House. The government came in, and it had been handed some rule changes from the previous government that allowed much more power into the hands of the governing party. But that wasn't enough for this government. The people who advise Mike Harris, the unelected people, the Tom Longs of this world, the John Toogoods, the Guy Giornos of this world, said to Mike Harris: "You know, that democratic system they have in Parliament is slowing things down too much. We should be rushing forward. It doesn't matter if our own supporters believe that we're moving too quickly, too rashly, too radically, too recklessly, and not looking at the consequences of our actions. It doesn't matter. We've got to move faster."

It got to a ridiculous point in June of this year when Al Palladini, if I may call him that, the Minister of Transportation of the day, was trying to get a bill through the Legislature dealing with truck safety. We in the official opposition had been asking, as were the NDP, for the government to bring forward this truck safety bill that we heard a lot about, because we saw a press conference and a lot of furore at this press conference. Then, when the Minister of Transportation of the day tried to bring in his truck safety bill, we found out that it had to be shoved aside because Guy Giorno wanted the rule changes through.

Let's look at a sports analogy, where you would have two normal hockey teams with people of normal size and

normal temperament out there, and one team decided to get a lot of huge players who were very physical. In hockey they call them goons — I'm not suggesting this for the government, but that's used in hockey analogy — so a team that was very rough and tough, the way the old Philadelphia Flyers used to be, say about 1975. Then they decided, "Let's rig the rules to favour the team which relies on intimidating tactics," like the Philadelphia Flyers did in 1975, the rough, tough Broad Street Bullies. They changed the rules so they favoured one team over the other team, that is, the government over the opposition.

Some government members were convinced by some people in the cabinet that this was good for the whole Legislature, that this would hurry things through. "This is just like the business we run. We've got to just rush things through."

There is a difference between business and governing in a Legislature. Yes, governments should apply some business practices in many instances. That's healthy, that's good, and it helps with efficiency. But this House cannot be run like a business, where somebody simply snaps his or her fingers and something is done. The healthiest democracy is one where there is a full debate, where all sides are heard, and ultimately a decision is made and the public renders its decision at election time.

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Instead, this government has done the following: It has severely restricted the amount of time for debate. It has now produced a situation, which many people would find amusing, where it can now count an afternoon session and an evening session as two different days for the purpose of calculating how much time is spent on a bill. That's called two for one. It has relegated question period down to seventh place from third place in the order of procedures during the day. It has removed virtually all of the bargaining chips, if I could use that term, that the opposition might be able to utilize to help slow down the government agenda.

My friend Norm Sterling, now the House leader of the Conservative Party, made an impassioned speech where he said that it was essential that as a member he have the right to at least slow down a government, and occasionally, in extraordinary circumstances, bring the government momentarily to a halt so it can reconsider its position.

It's important that we draw to the attention of the people of Ontario the policies which are coming through, but instead the government wanted to grease the skids and rush everything through the House. And that's not enough for the government, because now they keep utilizing what are called time allocation motions. That's a nice term used for closing off debate, slamming the door shut on debate. Time after time after time, on very controversial and far-reaching revolutionary legislation, this government has done exactly that and has restricted, unfortunately, the amount of hearing time that people might have across this province to have their input into the legislation and perhaps suggest positive changes.

The minister responsible for privatization is here this evening listening in rapt attention to the debate. That

minister has been given the responsibility of privatizing many of the institutions which have served Ontario extremely well over the years. I hope he proceeds with a good deal of caution in doing so.

Certainly there is a group of people within the government, mostly the unelected people and some of the right-wing revolutionaries — the Reform-a-Tories, as we prefer to call them in opposition — who would like, for instance, to get rid of TVO. TVO is looked upon almost worldwide with envy for its productions: outstanding productions, outstanding service.

Interestingly enough, the government probably thought it was going to very easily get away with privatizing TVO. But I think our friend Isabel Bassett, who is now a minister, has found that there are many friends of TVO, our educational network, out there. When she was asked a question the other day on this subject, she quickly flipped the hot potato over to the minister of privatization. I don't blame her for doing so because I know there is an agenda in this government to get rid of some of the good institutions, which in that case a Conservative government had established, the government of Bill Davis: a government of the moderate centre, a government of pragmatism, a government which understood mainstream, middle-of-the-road Ontario, unlike the present administration, which is far into the ditch on the right wing.

Another institution that you'll be concerned about if you have one of these in your community is the Province of Ontario Savings Office. I see in Bill 164, a new piece of legislation brought forward, ill-conceived — half of it has to be torn apart now because there were big mistakes made. As my friend from Scarborough-Agincourt would say, they rushed ahead, threw Bill 164 on the table and found out there were many errors in it that had to be corrected. We in the opposition are going to try to help out with the correction of those.

One of the things we don't want to see, of course, is the Province of Ontario Savings Office, a very successful operation which many people like, being turned over to the big banks, which are already making huge profits while they are laying people off. I like the Province of Ontario Savings Office. I hope some of the government members will, behind the closed door of caucus, follow the good example of Gary Carr and Toni Skarica and stand up against this government's proposal.

I was glad the government whip mentioned the government advertising. I haven't seen a government which has used political propaganda and self-promotion in the manner that the Harris government has.

Mr Hastings: Like the Peterson regime.

Interjection: Is that the member from Bedrock?

Mr Bradley: Other governments have provided advertisements which simply said: "Here is the legislation. Should you wish to comment, here are the public hearings." I can remember, for instance, in the Ministry of the Environment, because we were promulgating many changes —

Interjection.

Mr Bradley: Is there a barking dog somewhere in the House?

Mr Hastings: Yes, there is.

Mr Bradley: I hear some barking coming from somewhere. I don't know where it is. There's a grumbling or a barking going on. It's the member for Bedrock, somebody over here said. I don't know where that is. I diverge from the right topic.

Mr Hastings: Keep meandering around over there.

Mr Bradley: I've now provoked another comment from the member for Rexdale, who is busy reading his newspaper and commenting to me.

My friend the member for Cambridge interjects as well. I remember he had to order Carol Jones out of the hearings in St Catharines. Remember, she was Bob Welch's constituency office person and she appeared at the hearings. She wanted to make a presentation on Bill 160 and they wouldn't let her on the agenda. Steve Kaiser, head of the Urban Development Institute, the developers of Ontario, was given half an hour. He's entitled to have a period of time before the committee; we all want to see that. He got half an hour and other people got 10 minutes, and poor Carol Jones got nothing. So she stood up at the back and she created a commotion.

Interjection.

Mr Bradley: The member for Rexdale makes noise about this, but she had worked for the Conservatives in the last provincial election. Frank, did she work in your riding? I think she worked in Lincoln riding: a long-time Conservative supporter. I'll tell you, she was very critical on that day, beside herself by the fact that she had been shut out from making comments.

Mr E.J. Douglas Rollins (Quinte): She got her picture in the paper.

Mr Bradley: She had her picture in the paper, my friend says. I know he wouldn't say that that's why she did this, because she was Bob Welch's constituency assistant. I admired her in that role. Our offices worked well together. Here was a Conservative being shut out of the process because she didn't agree with the government.

I'm sure she would be concerned about the government advertising, the kind of attack ads that we saw. Every time you turn around now, you see Mike Harris on television and he's advertising some new government program. It isn't, for instance, the Ministry of Health saying: "We're going to have new health cards. Here's where you get them. Here are the requirements." That's normal information. Nobody objects to that. Or if the government is making a change to a significant regulation, they put a big ad in the newspaper that says: "Here is what we propose for change. Could we have your comments? Here is when the hearing will be held." Nobody objects to that. That's exactly what should be done.

I know my friend from Quinte, who interjects this evening, would want some advertising done for people to appear before a committee dealing with predatory gas pricing, because when I asked questions of the government before, they just handed the hot potato off somewhere else. The Premier huffed and puffed: "Oh, gas prices. Aren't

those oil companies awful." I said, "Well, Premier, what are you going to do about it?" "I'm going to get the feds after them." Of course he has it right within his own jurisdiction. He could pass in this Legislature — I've called for them to bring it forward — a predatory pricing law for gas; that is, so that the major oil companies cannot sell their product to their own dealers at one price and to independent dealers at a higher price, thereby in the long run forcing the only competition, the independents, out of business. But all I heard from the Premier of Ontario was huffing and puffing; no action. I was disappointed, because he sounded very firm. My colleagues will remember how firm he sounded when he was chastising the oil companies, but when it came down to calling them on the carpet, he was nowhere to be found.

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I wouldn't mind that kind of advertising. If you're saying, "Here's the bill that's going to be before the Legislature and we want some comments," I would say that's good. But I'll tell you, the government reached an all-time low when it used taxpayers' money to present attack ads on television against one segment of our population; that is, those who deliver the education services on the front line, the trustees and the teachers of this province.

I mentioned time allocations. The Speaker made an interesting ruling the other day where he as much as said, "We know the government has changed the rules." I know that and you know that, Mr Speaker. The government has changed the rules, stacked the deck in favour of the government, concentrated the power in the hands of a few cabinet ministers and unelected political advisers, and yet the government can now bring in closure motions or time allocation motions which throw all the rules out the window and say, "Notwithstanding the fact that we've changed the rules, rigged the rules in our own favour, we're still going to bring in special motions which rush legislation through the House."

Even those who agree with the government say they should slow down, that they're moving too quickly, too recklessly and not looking at the consequences of their actions. Even some who agree with the government say that. They want the government to take time to do it right rather than simply to rush it through, to do it quickly.

I heard mention of tax increases. I always listen to the tax increases. They say, "Well, the NDP or the Liberals had 32 or 33 tax increases." I have counted 187 tax increases by this government so far — 187 tax increases and there are probably some I haven't found yet. Do you know why that is? Because Mike Harris, when he was — that's why I call him Mike Harris; then he was the third party leader, he wasn't Premier Harris. He said, when they asked him about user fees, "A user fee is a tax." This government has initiated all kinds of new user fees and taxes. I've just caught up with 187 of them. You can imagine that there are far more.

I know that he said in the Common Sense Revolution, as you people like to call it — others have called it the Nonsense Revolution; I wouldn't be that unkind — he

talks about health care. He says, "Under this plan, there will be NO new user fees." "NO" is in big letters. I think we all know that there have been many new user fees —

Mr Phillips: The drugs for seniors.

Mr Bradley: — the drugs for seniors particularly. They know there have been new user fees.

When I see this government move so far to the right, it reminds me of the former member for London South, who sits in the gallery tonight, the Honourable Gordon Walker. I introduce him and I hope the members will applaud for him as he rises.

Applause.

Mr Bradley: Now I want to say that the right wing is in good hands because Bob Wood is as right wing as you are, or more, Gordon. I'm not supposed to address people in the gallery, I know, but Gord was a man who believed that there should be a solid right wing to the government. I remember when I was the correctional services critic and he was correctional services minister, we toured many of the institutions in Ontario. It always seemed that after we left, Gord, there was some kind of ruckus that took place for some reason. I can't figure out what that is. But we certainly welcome our friend Gord Walker this evening to the gallery of the House and wish him well, as I'm sure all of us will.

So I've found 187 tax increases by this government so far. I'm looking for more; I'm sure there are more.

But there's a big tax cut they were giving. I've talked to conservative economists, because I said, "Look, I don't want to talk to socialist or liberal economists. I want to talk to the conservative economists and let them tell me about a huge tax cut while you're running a deficit." One of the people I talked to was Dr Joseph Kushner, whom they refer to sometimes as Professor Negative or Dr No — it might be Dr Negative and Professor No, one of the two — because on St Catharines city council for the last 20 years he has been the voice of caution, the voice who always said, "Can we afford it?" He would characterize himself as a small-c conservative.

I said to him and some other people who are economists: "Does it make sense to have a tax cut which will cost about \$5 billion a year in revenue, maybe \$5.5 billion in revenue, at a time when you're running a deficit? Don't you have to borrow the money to give a tax cut if you're running a deficit?" The answer is yes. Some of my Conservative friends really thought about this carefully and said, "It can't be the case." I said, "Well, are we running a deficit?" "Yes." "Are we giving an income tax cut which benefits the wealthiest people in our society in actual dollars the most?" They say yes. I say, "Well, there it is."

The conservative economists can't understand this. They say it would make sense maybe if the budget was balanced. That's the time when you contemplate tax cuts, or if the government hadn't embarked upon such deep tax cuts, because now we're paying —

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): What about sales tax?

Mr Bradley: Or sales tax cuts, which help everybody. But they didn't do this.

I wanted to know, where did I see this before? It was New Jersey. The Republican governor of New Jersey who was narrowly re-elected against a relatively unknown opponent —

Mr Phillips: But she didn't borrow the money for the tax cut.

Mr Bradley: No, but she didn't borrow the money. That's right. One thing she didn't do was borrow the money for the tax cut. But they had a 30% tax cut there and huge property tax increases. Does that sound familiar?

Mr Kormos: Say it ain't so.

Mr Bradley: It sounds familiar. That's what's going to happen. I should leave this to my colleague Mr Phillips, but I can assure the municipalities out there that there's going to be a slush fund in this year. Don't worry. You will have to eventually assume a lot more financial responsibility, but there will be a slush fund to tide the government over to the election. They'll be doling the money out. The Tories already on local councils are saying to their treasurers when somebody else asks the questions: "Oh, well, don't worry. Won't we really be looked after?" They may be looked after for a year, maybe two years if the election takes a little longer, but after that you're on your own. When they see the minister coming with a bag of money in his hand, maybe two bags of money in his hand, they should beware, because that's only temporary transition money coming.

Mr David Caplan (Orlino): Either that or Al won the 649.

Mr Bradley: Exactly. Now I look at the hospital funding cuts. In my area, the Niagara Peninsula — my friend from Welland-Thorold would know this — we have seen hospital funding cut by some \$43 million in operating funds for hospitals. That's had an effect. People try to paper it over and say: "Oh, well, it has no real effect. Hospitals are still able to cope."

Ask anybody who's been in a hospital. Ask a patient, ask the family of patients, ask the friends, what the hospital care available is today compared to, say, 10 years ago and they will tell you it's nowhere near what it was. Is that because the staff is uncaring? No, the staff is very much caring, but there are so few staff available, so few financial resources because we have to pay for that tax cut, remember. It's important to give the wealthiest people that big tax cut and we have to pay for it in terms of hospitals.

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In the hospital struggle it's like every other public institution that the right wing likes to attack. What they do is they discredit it. They underfund it. They make it not work as well as it should. Then it opens itself to privatization or closing.

In the Niagara Peninsula they want to close or radically alter five hospitals: Douglas Memorial in Fort Erie, Port Colborne General Hospital, West Lincoln Memorial in Grimsby, Niagara-on-the-Lake General Hospital and Hotel Dieu Hospital in St Catharines.

They had a local committee that was set up and I made a presentation to them. I said: "Where I disagree with you is this: You've accepted what I call crackpot realism, and that is, we have an excellent system of health care — it does cost money but we have an excellent system — so we've got to punish ourselves now. We've got to underfund this system. We've got to close hospitals."

I remember Dr David Foot, author of *Boom, Bust and Echo*, a bestseller, a Canadian book. He talks about demographics. He was asked by a university student at Brock University: "Sir, taking into account the demographic picture of the Niagara Peninsula" — keeping in mind that we have, I believe, per capita the oldest population in Canada, that is, the greatest number of people per capita 55 or over in the Niagara Peninsula — "what would be the first recommendation you would make to Mike Harris as Premier of Ontario?" He said, "Don't close hospitals."

What are we doing in the Niagara Peninsula? Well, the local committee, because they knew the government was going to withdraw \$43 million from the system, said, "I guess we'll have to close hospitals." I reject that. To me it's sheer madness to be closing hospitals and to be underfunding hospitals when we should be providing sufficient funding to have them operate appropriately.

Now they say, "People are going to be served at home with home care." Well, the telephone calls I've had in the last couple of weeks have all been from people saying, "They're cutting our home care." Fewer physiotherapists —

Mr Kormos: A 30% reduction.

Mr Bradley: A 30% reduction, my friend from Welland-Thorold says.

Mr Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge): Is your mother complaining again?

Mr Bradley: My friend from Cambridge says, "Are they complaining again?" I think the people have a right to complain about it in the Niagara Peninsula because they have seen these cutbacks taking place.

Mr Martiniuk: You guys were overfunded for years. Too much money down there. Too much health care.

Mr Bradley: I want to repeat what the member for Cambridge has said. The Progressive Conservative member for Cambridge has said we were overfunded for years in Niagara, and what else?

Mr Phillips: Too much money.

Mr Bradley: And there's too much money being put in there. I recall a couple of years ago the Niagara District Health Council said that just to bring us up to the provincial average per capita, we'd need \$16 million in funding, I believe. The people of the Niagara Peninsula will be interested to know when I send them the Hansard that the Progressive Conservative member for Cambridge says we've been overfunded.

Mr Phillips: Too much money.

Mr Bradley: Too much money being spent in the Niagara region. I know those people who are now being kicked out of the hospital in a more sickly condition and much more quickly, and therefore will need much more

sophisticated home care, are going to be flabbergasted by the comments of the member for Cambridge, who says the government is already spending too much money on people in the Niagara Peninsula. Well, I don't agree with him.

I must say, I'll have to talk to Tom Froese and Frank Sheehan and Bart Maves and Tim Hudak. I'm going to have to talk to them because they're going to be surprised that the member for Cambridge says the government is spending too much money in the Niagara region. My friend Mr Maves has indicated in a colourful way that that is in fact the case.

I know my friend from Scarborough-Agincourt is looking for some time, so how can I wind down? Here is something the government should never do, very dangerous ground to get on. I heard my friend the chief government whip, the minister without portfolio, start to talk about shrimp dinners. I'm going to tell you, cabinet ministers should never lecture others on dinners and expenses. I'll leave it at that. I think it's very dangerous ground to get on when you attack others for that. One of my favourite biblical quotations, and it's not exact, is, "Let him who is without sin cast the first stone." I think we should always remember that.

I'm going to end my portion of this this evening by talking briefly about video lottery terminals. The member from Agincourt believes this will take some time; it will not.

Interjection: Conrad Black —

Mr Bradley: I will not talk about Conrad Black tonight, but I want to say that I know that the family values caucus who go to church on Sundays, who are proud of their religious affiliations, as they most certainly should be, must be telling the Premier of this province that it's time to call a halt to the escalation of gambling opportunities in this province.

We now have a casino in Niagara Falls which we call a tourist casino. There's one in Windsor and there's one in Orillia. I'm not a fan of casinos anywhere, everybody knows that, but they exist. I'm not going to fight old battles. I'm not going to go back and say, "Tear them down." What I am saying to the government, however, is let's pause. Let's not move forward with an escalation of gambling opportunities.

The charity casinos are different. While the tourist casinos bring people in who are tourists, the charity casinos in various communities, like a vacuum cleaner, simply suck all of the money out of that community. People with afflictions, people who are very vulnerable, people who are desperate, people who are addicted to gambling are the ones who are hurt most by those kinds of gambling opportunities.

I suspect some day, I say to my friend from Agincourt and others, this will lead to video lottery terminals, which are electronic slot machines, in every bar and every restaurant, on every street, in every neighbourhood of every village, town and city in Ontario.

Mr Rollins: How about school yards?

Mr Bradley: And who knows, as the member for Quinte says, perhaps even the school yards of the province. Heaven knows, with the billions of dollars this government is removing from the education system, I agree with him that they may well need that money. I hope they don't get it from that particular source.

I'm anxious to get to the remarks of my colleague from Scarborough-Agincourt, so I will terminate mine now and listen in rapt attention to a very credible voice.

Mr Phillips: I'm pleased to continue the debate on the motion for the House business. I want to focus my first comments on the property tax issue because we are going to be dealing next week with Bill 164, which amazingly enough amends a bill that passed the Legislature only yesterday.

Mr Bradley: How can that be?

Mr Phillips: My colleague says, "How can that be?" It is typical that we continue to see this government need to patch up legislation, so we will be debating the bill next week to amend the bill that we passed simply a matter of 24 hours ago.

I want to spend a fair bit of time on this bill because the people of Ontario, as of January 1, are going to experience a dramatic change in the property tax system in Ontario. Mr Turnbull indicated earlier that I have been supportive of changes in the property tax, and that's absolutely 100% correct. He quotes a document from my 1990 campaign where I said that I'm supportive of a certain change in property taxes. I said it in 1990, 1991, 1992. I've always said that. I haven't changed a bit. I still continue to be supportive of it.

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I might say that view contrasts with the view of some of the government members. I know Mr Leach indicated before — I've got it right here actually. The reason I raise this is because the member quoted from a piece of literature that I put out in a campaign. I said I was in favour of market value assessment. That's true. Mr Leach put out a position before the election. He said, "My party and I will never support market value assessment." That's signed by Al Leach.

Mr Bradley: It's a misprint.

Mr Phillips: It's not a misprint. It's the way Al Leach won that election; there's no question about that. Now the bill that we have just passed implements, word for word, market value assessment. The only reason I keep raising that is the members keep quoting from a campaign document of mine. I'm proud to say I believed in it five years ago, four years ago, three years ago. But Al Leach, on behalf of Mike Harris, said they would never implement this, and I might add that Ms Bassett said the same thing.

The problem with the property tax bill is, without any question of a doubt, it is going to create chaos. I will use not my language, but I will quote from the Association of Municipal Clerks and Treasurers. These are our senior municipal officials, our senior municipal bureaucrats, widely respected, the organization of the senior officials running our cities and towns and villages. They have been

begging the provincial government to listen to their concerns. It is they who will have the responsibility for implementing the property tax change.

I want to just go through a series of issues they have raised and share them with the people of Ontario. First, Mike Harris would have us believe that this new property tax system is going to simplify, clarify things, make it easier, make it simpler. What the municipality clerks and treasurers say to us is that the tax "system will be immensely complicated by the institution of some 84 classes and subclasses of property and up to 156 tax rates. Appeals will result from assessed property value. The combination of these factors will increase the complexity of the property tax system rather than streamline it." So when the members ask why we voted against it, listen to the clerks and treasurers. We are complicating the system rather than simplifying it.

They then go on to tell us: "Implementation on January 1, 1998, is a high-risk situation for the stability and financial health of the municipal sector. There are some municipalities in Ontario that simply will not be able to cope with this situation." They're telling us in as clear language as possible that this thing is being badly implemented.

The third thing they say is, "The association...finds overwhelming the amount of regulations to be set by the minister and the extent of the minister's involvement in a process that is supposed to be municipally driven."

There is perhaps no more tangible evidence of that than the fact that now Mike Harris will set the property taxes on businesses. Well over half of the business taxes on properties will be set not here in the Legislature — the municipalities will have no opportunity to debate it — they will be set by the Premier. The municipalities and the clerks point out that's wrong.

They went on to say in an analysis of the next bill, Bill 164 — and again I stress this is an organization that represents 93% of our municipalities. It's an organization that's been in existence since 1937. These are the equivalent of the deputy ministers of the province; these are the senior bureaucrats. They're careful with their language. They have no axe to grind one way or another. They are simply there to serve the public. They say, "If Bill 149 is passed in its current form, it will create serious problems in municipal administration." Of course the government has passed that.

They go on to say — this is the executive director — "The cumulative effect of Bill 106, 149" — those are the two property tax bills — "160 and 164 is that we no longer have a municipal property tax system; we have a provincial tax system administered by municipalities." They went on to say: "The association is concerned about the process by which municipal legislation is created and implemented. Bill 164 amends sections within Bill 149, Bill 160, but those bills have yet to pass third reading." They passed third reading in the last few days.

They go on to say — isn't it wonderful? This government wants to amend legislation that hasn't even been passed yet — "Surely this illustrates better than

anything that this government, in its haste, is making legislation by the seat of its pants without proper thought or planning. Yesterday's bill is amended by today's, which will likely be amended by tomorrow's." Sure enough, the bill that we passed yesterday we will amend next week, I gather, according to the motion we're dealing with here.

I also want to comment a little bit on: "So what would you do? You're nothing but negative." We proposed dozens of amendments to try and fix the bill. I'll just give you three examples. We said that rather than setting taxes by regulation, they should be set by legislation. It's the same issue the clerks and treasurers raised. That was the feeling. This is a serious issue. One of the members over there is shaking his head. I'm not sure what his riding is — Northumberland.

Today I said to the Premier: "Why would we pass a bill when the final date for appealing your property taxes is June 29 and nobody in this province is going to get their 1998 tax bill until July or August or September?" Why would we do that? Why would we have the final date for appeal be a date that comes before you actually get your tax bill? Nobody will know what their property taxes are in 1998 until at least July, August or September. The Premier said I was wrong. I'm not wrong. The Premier does these sorts of things. He once said to me I used erroneous numbers here in the Legislature. I'll tell you what I did. I went back to my office and sent him a letter which was dated February 25. I said:

"Yesterday in the Legislature you said...I produced 'erroneous numbers'...."

"Now that you have chosen to make this serious public accusation that I produce 'erroneous numbers,' I call on you to produce your evidence on this."

In other words, he says something like that and has nothing to back it up. Of course, that was February 25. He never responded to me. Today he said it was incorrect that the final date of appeal was June 29 and that the people will not get their tax bills until July and August. I'll tell you, phone any municipality, get on the phone tonight, and you will find that what I said was right and what the Premier said was wrong. He just sits there and says it, and I guess because he's Premier, he feels he can say whatever he wants to say. But we are making a huge mistake. Again, we proposed an amendment. We said, "Listen, for 1998 only, people should have up till eight weeks after they get their final tax bill to appeal their taxes." No, no, that was rejected out of hand.

We proposed an amendment to deal with the issue that my colleague from Ottawa South raised on the Daybreak organization, a non-profit organization providing wonderful community services that will be put at serious risk because of a bureaucratic mistake in the bill. We proposed an amendment to fix that, just a small issue perhaps in the total scheme of things, but a major issue for those organizations. But that was rejected.

I point those things out because, as I say, I think we proposed perhaps two dozen amendments to try and fix this bill.

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I don't know whether the other members are beginning to get faxes and phone calls on the problems that this bill is creating. I will just say that the business occupancy tax is now coming off; January 1 it no longer applies. Here's what's going to happen. I'm not bashing the banks, they are fine organizations, but that one single move means that the bank towers, those large buildings we see when we look south from this building —

Mr Bradley: How do they do under this plan?

Mr Phillips: — on each building taxes will come down by \$3 million to \$5 million a year, just with the stroke of a pen.

Mr Bradley: What about small businesses?

Mr Phillips: My colleague says, "What about small businesses?" The value of those buildings on January 1 will go up by \$25 million to \$30 million a building. You reduce costs by \$3 million to \$5 million, the building goes up actually between \$30 million and \$50 million. But all of that lost revenue to the municipality has to be recovered. When those five towers reduce their property taxes by \$3 million to \$5 million a tower, \$15 million of property tax has to be recovered from somewhere else. Where? We're seeing where.

I've got my first fax here from a small business, 14 employees. What's going to happen now is that the business occupancy tax is coming off. Banks pay a high rate, small businesses pay a low rate. It now will be applied uniformly. So the small business that paid a low rate will be raised; the big business that paid a high rate will come down. The bank towers will pay \$3 million less; small businesses will pay more.

Here's a small business, 14 employees. Their property tax for 1998, the landlord has estimated — the landlord I think knows what he or she is doing — will go up by \$4,000, roughly 10%. It may not seem like a lot of money to a bank tower, but to this business, a business of 14 people, you can imagine, \$4,000 is significant. When people say, "Why would you vote against that bill?" I say, "Here's the impact."

I remember now when the government introduced this reform. They said, "We're going to protect small business." They did nothing of the kind. There is no protection in the bill for small business, although small business, believe me — I will bet a lot of money that all of us will be getting phone calls. In fact, I had another fax from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business.

Mr Bradley: What did they have to say?

Mr Phillips: They sent an emergency letter off to the Minister of Finance on this issue, dated November 25:

"We would urge your ministry to take action to clear up the widespread confusion which exists among landlords, tenants and municipal governments with regard to the impending changes. We would urge you to consider the disastrous effect that rolling the business occupancy tax on to the realty tax will have on some landlords and to take action to rectify the situation."

Today, as we tried to raise once again with the Premier the concerns out there about his tax bill, in his usual

arrogant fashion he dismissed them. He said I was wrong when I was right, which is frankly irritating. I think it must irritate the business community that when we're trying to get answers for them, the Premier simply dismisses fact as fiction and refuses to answer it. But on the business occupancy tax, without question, small business is going to be hurt.

The Premier promised there would be protection in the bill for small business. There is nothing in there that protects small business. There's a provision that would allow lower tax rates on property valued lower; in other words, on the first \$500,000 of property tax there could be a lower tax rate, and then hypothetically on the next \$500,000 to \$1 million another tax rate, and above \$2 million. But for many small businesses that I know, such as my friend here — he's in a large building, it won't impact him at all. He'll be faced with significant tax increases and no protection at all, no relief.

When we raise these issues, and we have in language as clear as you can imagine — bureaucrats are cautious with their language. The clerks and treasurers are an extremely responsible organization. I think you can tell by their language the frustration in saying: "Is anybody going to listen to us? We're telling you this is going to create chaos."

Yesterday Al Leach acknowledged he expects 600,000 appeals on this.

Mr Bradley: Won't the date be past?

Mr Phillips: People are going to have to appeal their taxes before they get their tax bill. They will get an assessment notice, no question of that. It'll have a number in there, but no one will know what it's going to mean until July or August. These are the Mike Harris property taxes. Every businessperson in this province, over half their property taxes will be set by Mike Harris.

I'll say that Bill 160 gives him absolute unfettered power to do whatever he wants. For anyone who follows this sort of stuff, it's actually in Bill 160, which is odd. But over half the business property tax will be set by Mike Harris and he gave himself the power to — get this. He can prescribe different tax rates for — this is on businesses — different municipalities, different parts of a municipality, different parts of a territory, different classes of property, different subclasses of real property, different portions of a property's assessment, different geographic areas, different parts of a municipality. Total unfettered rights for the Premier to do whatever he wants on setting property taxes. All he's said is, "I am going to recover from businesses at least \$3.6 billion."

You can see, it doesn't take, as they say, a rocket scientist. The bank towers are going to pay \$15 million less. Mike Harris wants the same money: \$15 million less from the bank towers, \$15 million more from everybody else. It's as simple as that. The promised protection for small business is nowhere.

I'm not sure what else we in opposition can do but say we have been supportive of property tax change. I will say that both ourselves and the NDP have done nothing to stop the process. We have tried every step of the way to amend

the bills, to improve them, but there has not been one single amendment by ourselves or the NDP that has been accepted by the government, many of which I think would clearly have been in the government's best interests to accept, but they were all rejected.

The train leaves the station on January 1. This thing is now in law. The clerks and treasurers and the CAOs, our major officials in the municipalities, have given us due warning.

I wanted to just quickly touch on a couple of other things that were raised by my colleague. On the job front: I thought the person who was in the chair earlier, Mr Bert Johnson from Perth, yesterday raised a very good question in the Legislature. It had to do with youth unemployment. He pointed out that the youth unemployment rate was 17.3% for the first 10 months of 1997. That is up dramatically from the same time a year ago; the first 10 months of 1996 it was 15.6%. The number of young people with jobs has actually dropped. I think it's at probably a 10-year low. It's lower than it's been in years, at 773,000 jobs. The number of young people unemployed is up dramatically over last year, by 17,000. The number of people out of work in Ontario in October 1997 was higher than when Mike Harris became Premier.

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I say all of those things because if we simply assume that the youth unemployment problem will go away — when we raise the question, that's essentially what the Premier says, "Everything's fine." I found it refreshing that one of the Conservative back bench would raise the 17.3% unemployment rate. That's a tragedy for all of us. It's unacceptable for all of us. It's substantially higher than in the rest of Canada. We used to pride ourselves on being the lowest in Canada. Now the rest of Canada is lower than us in that area.

I know the government thinks the public is behind them. I would say that increasingly the public is recognizing that the government is bungling these issues.

Mr Bradley: Moving too quickly.

Mr Phillips: Moving too quickly and not at all planned. I tell you, the property thing is bungled; a good idea is now screwed up. Education reform is bungled; a good idea is now screwed up. The downloading is bungled. Restructuring the relationship between the province and municipalities is bungled. You've dumped the wrong things on to our property taxes. All of the areas where we had the opportunity to improve have been bungled. That'll be the legacy unfortunately, a missed opportunity by doing the right areas badly.

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): It's a pleasure for me to be able to speak tonight, and I'd like to share my time with the member for Welland-Thorold.

It may interest people who are watching at home to know that what we're actually debating here is a motion about changing yet again the calendar of the Legislative Assembly. Many people may not know that we have rules in this House. Those rules clearly set out at what points in the year the people of Ontario can expect the Legislature to be operating here and when the breaks from that would

be. It gives them an opportunity to know when the appropriate time is for them to expect to find their MPPs in their constituency offices, when it's time to expect their MPPs to be working here in the Legislature, when they can expect bills to go out to committee and expect to present their views to government committees and when not.

A couple of days ago the House leader for the government party attempted to get this motion considered a routine motion, as though it was no big deal for the government yet again to change the calendar of this House. We were pleased, Mr Speaker, that you of course recognized that this is in fact a substantive motion, and that's why we're talking about it tonight.

It is quite clear this government has little respect for the institution of this Parliament and for the way it operates. One of the ways in which that disrespect has been shown has been that in absolutely every session we've had, there has been some change to the House calendar at one end or another.

I would not claim at all that this government is the first government to change the House calendar. That happened on a number of occasions during the five years we were in government, and it also happened a number of times when the Liberals were in government. So it's not that uncommon to have a motion before us, such as the one we've got tonight, which has us sit for a week longer at the Christmas break. It's almost a tradition that this happens as we try and complete legislation that's coming forward.

What makes this substantive as an issue is that this is — I've lost count actually. I think this is every single time the government has adjusted the calendar. Every single time we have met, either at the beginning or the end or in the middle of a session, there's been an adjustment to the calendar and the effect of that is that the people of Ontario have no way of knowing and expecting what the action of the Parliament is going to be.

There are members on the government side who may think people don't care in Ontario. I think one of the disconcerting things for them is exactly how much people do care. They like to know exactly what is going on. Particularly because of the revolutionary actions of this government, they want to know when the next blow is going to come. We fully expect that when this House rises there is likely to be a prorogation — in other words, it will be the end of this particular session of the House and the next time we come in it will be a different Parliament with a different session — and that we will be looking at the government's attempt to change the impression they have given during the first two and a half years of their rule. We know they have a number of matters that they want to shove through, to further the revolution before they take that action.

The member for York Mills, who I must say made a masterful debut speech in his role as a cabinet minister without portfolio tonight, pointed out and tried to prove that we are trying to obstruct the business of justice. He tried very hard to say that the actions of the opposition, in opposing the actions of the government, in asking

questions and in attempting to get answers to matters and in attempting to get public consultation on matters, were obstructionist, and in fact the member from East York suggested dilatory. I think that shows the depth of misunderstanding this government has about the role of government at all and the importance of working things through in a democratic way.

The member for York Mills was very proud to talk about how short a time debate was on average during the time the Conservatives were in power up to 1985. There's a reason for that. The governments of John Robarts and Bill Davis didn't try to change the face of Ontario overnight. They understood evolutionary politics, not revolutionary politics. They routinely did a study, put out a white paper for discussion, allowed people to build towards consensus, and when they brought bills into this House, they didn't try to truncate the public consultation. They tried to optimize those to build as great a consensus as possible. It couldn't be a more different style than this government under any circumstances because this government doesn't believe in consensus politics, and this government is making no effort to build consensus among the people of Ontario.

This government, as the member for York Mills said tonight, "We consulted before the election and we got elected and therefore we can do whatever we like." The reality is that's not how government has ever operated in this province before, including Conservative government. They have not done that kind of effort to truncate and to end discussion.

For the member for York Mills to talk about average length of debate without mentioning, of course, that that average includes extraordinary happenings, like the filibuster on Bill 103, which was done because this government was ignoring a referendum that had been held, was ignoring the protests of the people they were supposed to be governing.

Yes, it takes longer sometimes to get bills through when they are unjust, when they are not responsive to the needs of the people and when the opposition is very high. When things are extremely controversial, when there is no effort to build consensus but only an effort to bull things through and do things the way the government thinks they should be done, regardless of the response of those they govern, yes, it takes longer, one way or another.

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When a government does what this government has done and changes the rules of this House so they can bull things through even faster by creating two legislative days out of one, and then use that tool again and again and again to simply push things through that much more rapidly, you can expect nothing but controversy and nothing but efforts to make you slow down.

We don't happen to think your biggest problem is that you're going too fast; we think your biggest problem is that you're going in the wrong direction. Here again I must say I would agree with the member for York Mills, who said that at least between the Tories and the NDP we know where each other stands. We know that in most

cases that's diametrically opposed to one another, but at least we know where we stand.

I think there's a fair respect for the fact that although we interpret what we see differently — our perception of what the role of government is, what the role of society is, what social democracy is, what social justice is, and we're completely different in our impression on that — at least we know that those are deeply held beliefs we have and that we will act out of those beliefs even though we disagree. We respect one another for that and I think the member for York Mills is correct about that, quite unlike, as he pointed out, Liberals, who generally are able to be on any side of things. We certainly have seen in the past that when Liberals are running they sound as though they're New Democrats, and when they govern they seem more and more like Reform — at least in Ottawa.

Mr Bradley: Not last election, though.

Mrs Boyd: Not like last election, no. Last election you tried to outright your friends on the other side of the House, and of course again people said: "What is this? They talk one line and then they come out with this. Who are they? We don't know." As the member for York Mills said, flip-flop, flip-flop, flip-flop. It's not surprising the public parks their votes with Liberals, because the public can feel very comfortable sitting with people who can from one day to the next be any place they want. But when it comes to an election and you have to take a stand, look what's happened in the last couple of elections. The people who had 50% of the support before the election was called found it eroded very quickly.

From our perspective over here, quite frankly, half the time we look at these two parties and we can't tell the difference.

Mr Bradley: Tweedledum, Tweedledee.

Mrs Boyd: Tweedledum, Tweedledee — the Bobbsey Twins, if you like. When we look at the performance of the Liberals in Ottawa, who ran against the former Conservative government, saying how different they were going to be and then implemented the policies of that Conservative government much more efficiently than the Tories ever could, quite frankly we don't see the difference.

When we are talking about dealing with issues and ideas, part of the confusion about the discussion is that very often you're not really quite sure who's speaking when the Liberals are talking. The member for York Mills was quite right about that.

Mr Bradley: You can be sure I'm speaking most of the time.

Mrs Boyd: The member for St Catharines tells us that we can be sure he's talking most of the time, and he's right. One of the reasons for that, of course, is that as the House leader he has to be here and most of his colleagues often aren't, so he often, by default, gets to speak. He has, as you noticed in his remarks tonight, very set ideas about certain things that need to be discussed every day, and he is to be congratulated because he manages to discuss those things every day. His only loss is that, as the member for York Mills said, he doesn't have the MRI to talk about

any more. It may not have a hospital to be in, but at least there is an MRI and we don't have to hear about that any more.

The reality is, all joking aside, what we do in here is much more important than most Tory members seem to appreciate. We constantly are hearing from our Tory colleagues in committee and in this place that they don't see the point of what we're doing. I think that is a very important issue.

If you don't see the point of what you're doing in here, of course you don't care what the calendar is on which this place meets, of course you jig it around to suit your purposes, of course you look at it as something that is there for you to manipulate instead of something that is there so the population you govern has an opportunity to participate appropriately in the process, so that there is some certainty that through the legislative year there will be periods of time when MPPs will be available in their offices, when they will be available to be confronted on issues or supported on issues, when committees are going to be going out. All the various organizations that have different issues they want governments to deal with have come to expect that there will be times they have to work their process in their organizations to have a response to government. What this government has done is not allow that time.

People who might have been natural friends of this government have found themselves in opposition because they find the government rushing ahead, not consulting with them, not giving them the opportunity to render advice.

That, I can't emphasize enough, is an important part of government. It is a different style in this government, understand. Building consensus demands some respect for the opposite point of view. Building consensus requires that you actually listen. Building consent and consensus mean that when you see there is extremely strong opposition to something, you might just have a glimmer that there's something wrong with what you're doing, that everybody out there isn't out of step except you, that if everybody out there is opposing what you're doing, and basically you've made enemies of virtually every sector of the society, maybe there's something wrong with what you're doing and maybe this is the place, this place here and our committees and our constituencies, to deal with that issue.

One of the things that struck me when the member for York Mills was speaking was that he really wanted to use this as an opportunity to go through the usual talk about debt and deficit, and how the government is in this position because of the actions of other governments. But I have to tell you I was very pleased that he at least, unlike many of his colleagues, was quite fair as he went through the chain of events from the last time the Tories were in government in 1984 and actually conceded that a world-wide recession might have had something to do with the difficulties our government had in trying to deal with the kind of spending Liberals had done during the very high years of the late 1980s.

What he didn't say was that when we came into government, the health sector in this province had been used to double-digit increases every single year during the time the Liberals were in office — on average, 11.5% — every single year, increases to those budget.

It's not surprising that it has been difficult for the health sector to get some decent control over spending over a period of time. It's not surprising at all and it certainly was very difficult for us in government to begin to rein in that kind of spending and try and get the year-over-year increase into some kind of reasonable sense.

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I would say that the member for York Mills was partly right when he talked about the fact that the chain of events led us to the extremity of the government's position. When things are difficult, when we've been through a huge recession — and Ontario had never had a recession like this — the recessions that had hit our country, including the big Depression in the 1930s, had never attacked the industry base, the manufacturing prominence of Ontario and it was the first time that a lot of those industries that had never renewed themselves, had not kept up with the changes that are happening in the world, had not kept up with new processes and technological change, found themselves unable to maintain the kind of pre-eminence that they'd had before and, with the advent of free trade, of course found themselves unable to compete. That's what happened in the 1990s. That's very, very much the picture that was there.

The member for York Mills then complained that in Ontario we spend more on health care and on education, on some of these social spending areas than anybody else in Canada. Let's not be surprised at that. That's been true for a long time and was true through the 42 years that the Tories were in power before. Why? Because until that big recession in the 1990s, Ontario had been the richest province. Ontario had the wherewithal to build the kind of supportive society that spends money.

To hear this government talk, you'd think taxes were a bad thing. Well, they are not a bad thing in and of themselves. Of course they're not, because we all set up a tax system in which we would have a progressive way of assessing responsibility through taxes to each citizen and share the resources raised in a way that raised the general health and the general wellbeing of our population. And Tories did that. That's what people expected when they elected a Tory government. They expected a continuation of that respect for government services, for the value of having a tax system that spread the resources so that the general health and wellbeing of the population was better.

What this government is is not that kind of government. We know that you're mostly Reform-a-Tory. In fact, we know that basically your view is government is bad, government services are bad, public services are bad and taxes are bad. You want to go back to the bad old days where someone who was unfortunate gets blamed for being unfortunate and has to rely on charity, not on the mutual responsibility of citizens to build together, and you know it's going to cost in the long run.

The Liberals and our government had, over that 10-year period, Premier's councils, the Liberals' Premier's Council on Health Strategy, our Premier's Council on Health, Well-being and Social Justice, which looked very hard at what creates a healthy community. What gives us health? How do we attain the kind of level of health that we're capable of having? How do we maintain that in a society that cares about having a healthy society?

One of the things that became very clear is that the key component to a healthy society, to a healthy population, depends on the basic determinants of health. Do people have economic security? Do people have enough to eat? Do people have a safe home? Are people safe from violence? Do people have the kind of certainty that they are going to be able to care for their families over a period of time? Those determinants of health are extremely important in predicting how much we're going to have to pay on health care.

You people, this government, have reduced the funding in certain parts of health care with the promise that you're going to reinvest in other parts of health care. So far, the reinvestment has mostly been severance pay and reconstruction costs. In fact, your own member for York Mills admitted that, that that's mostly what any increased spending is right now. But what you also have done is undermine the very determinants of health in a consistent way across all areas.

The first thing you did was to reduce the subsistence incomes of the poorest people in the province by nearly 22%, making it impossible for many of them to maintain secure homes. In fact, the numbers of homeless are growing exponentially in most cities in this province: not enough money to have good nutrition, not enough money to buy warm clothing, not enough money to provide the supports that children need in order to be confident and to learn. That was the first thing.

Now you've also destroyed rent control, which will further attack the ability of people to maintain safe and secure housing. You have consistently downloaded from the tax system on to the very regressive fee-for-service system more and more of the costs of people's basic needs, prescription drugs, for example, and when I say regressive, it's very clear that \$2 to someone who earns what a member of this Legislature earns for a prescription may not be too much, but if the only thing you earn is that subsistence income, that \$540 a month that goes to a single person in this province, and you're not very well in the first place and you have to pay \$2 per prescription, the impact on your budget is enormous.

Then of course you attacked the school system by reducing drastically the funds available for two years in a row, forcing school boards to cut out things like junior kindergarten, which have been shown to be extremely important as the determinant of health for young people. It's unbelievable when you look at the whole context of the way that your policies, one after the other, one after the other, actually attack the determinants of health.

Then when we come to the health system itself, the member for York Mills was talking about the restructuring

and moving people back into the community, getting them out of hospitals so that we weren't saying that hospital care equals health care. He's right about that, we have done that, but what has the effect been? Hospitals and doctors are covered under medicare.

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The Canada Health Act demands that there be no extra payment for doctors and hospitals. But the services that are delivered in the community, long-term care, home care, those services are not covered by the Canada Health Act and they are becoming increasingly more and more privatized, more and more dependent upon what people can pay. The Premier, who kept stating a tax is a copay is a user fee, suddenly has changed his mind.

Mr Kormos: And his tune.

Mrs Boyd: And his tune. All of a sudden, all of these added user fees that are happening are not taxes, but of course they are and they're regressive taxes because if I have to pay the same fee with my income as someone with an income that is a quarter of my income, they pay a higher proportion of their available dollars for that service.

Similarly, when you do a tax cut, those of us who earn at our level get more return than those who earn at a lower level. So they get it coming and going. You cut the taxes, they get little benefit from that and then you raise all these user fees, which take no account of ability to pay, and they get it coming and going. What is happening in this province is a huge redistribution of income, all going towards those who are more well off from those who are less well off. Every policy you bring forward increases the effect of that movement.

So what are we doing? We are building up for ourselves in the future huge health costs because we are increasing that gap between those who are well off and those who are not. We are increasing the pressure on those who are least able to care for themselves and allowing those who are most able to look after themselves more and more supports.

The reality is that whatever happens with restructuring of the health care system, it is not taking account of the increased problems in health care that are going to accrue out of the social policies of this government. All the predictions that we've made about what kind of health care we're going to need, how many beds and how many services, are probably already skewed because the determinants of health have eroded to the extent that the health of the population over time is going to erode. That's something that needs to be taken into account by this government.

Health care is, as the member for York Mills said, not to do with bricks and mortar. We agree, but the people who deliver the services are the ones who are losing their jobs. We're losing their expertise and they are not available to us in the community because of course the determination is to drive down the wages, drive down the standards, drive down the expertise of those who deliver those services, instead of taking advantage of that expertise and making sure that what we have in our

province is that kind of expert and dedicated care that we've enjoyed in hospitals, delivered in the community by the people whom we have relied on for years to do that. Instead of that, what we see is every pressure on those delivering health care to lower standards, to de-skill workers, to offer the lowest common denominator of care.

The member for York Mills complained that we had the highest level of services. That's something we should be proud of, not ashamed of. It's one of the reasons we are seen as being such a successful province. We're the envy of our sister provinces, or were, and that's something to be proud of, not something to be sorry about.

Before I end my part of this, I want to make a few comments about the necessity for this government, if it's really going to change its visage, if you like, for the population, if they're going to try and convince the population that they're not as bad as they're cracked up to be, one of the best ways would be to build some actual respect for the legislative process. I think one of the most discouraging things for those of us who love the democratic process is working with people who have no respect for the process that we're working in —

Mr Kormos: Or understanding.

Mrs Boyd: Or understanding — who think that the object of the game is to rush things through instead of doing things right. That's why we spend a lot of time doing amendments to bills that if they'd been done right in the first place wouldn't have had to have all those amendments. But virtually every piece of legislation the government has brought forward has had to have hundreds and hundreds of amendments because they have been so carelessly done in the first place and the advice has not been taken in the first place.

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): We have been listening and then we responded.

Mrs Boyd: Oh, you've been listening and you responded. Yeah, right.

Mr Galt: And then we responded.

Mrs Boyd: Yeah, right. That's why all the amendments are your own, right? Of course. They're mostly mistakes and you all know it. All of you sit in committee and all of you know that there's goof after goof after goof in that legislation that has had to be corrected, and you know that. I mean the absurdity of our passing of bills yesterday that we're discussing amendments to next week is part —

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order. Member for Northumberland, member for Scarborough-Ellesmere, come to order. It's a quarter to 9. Member for London Centre.

Mrs Boyd: If you take your time and go through the process and build the consensus, you don't have the opposition. That's what you haven't been prepared to do. You've taken a style of government that says, "We have a majority; we can do what we want to do." That is not respectful of the process as it has ever been in Ontario before, and you cannot expect anything but very vigorous opposition, not just in here but out there in the streets, out

there in your constituencies, when you are so disrespectful of the political traditions and the democratic traditions of this province.

That's not going to end and that's why at every turn when you flout that process, you will find us speaking up on behalf of the processes that have made this province a democratic province and have given us the kind of good government that we used to enjoy in Ontario.

The Speaker: Further debate? The member for Welland-Thorold.

Mr Kormos: First, let me express my gratitude to Marion Boyd from London Centre for allowing me to use some of her time out of her one-hour leadoff. It has become increasingly difficult in this Legislature as a result of this government to participate in debate because this government dramatically changed the rules to restrict, to inhibit debate. To ensure that people representing, as it is now, any one of the 130 ridings across Ontario — this government has done the thing that was necessary to ensure that their representatives won't have a platform here in the provincial Legislature. That's why I'm grateful to Ms Boyd from London Centre. I'm grateful for her comments and I listened carefully over the course of the last mere 35 minutes. I know she would have wanted to have gone on because I know she has a whole lot more to say, but I appreciate the chance to speak.

We're speaking to item 55, Mr Sterling's motion, and I want to assist in bringing this back on topic and addressing specifically the motion of Mr Sterling. You might have heard earlier today when we were addressing Bill 98, I talked about the folks down in Niagara from Castropignano, from that small town in Italy, who settled in Niagara, who worked to make this province the great place that it has been, who worked with enthusiasm and foresight and vigour. I spoke about that, though, in the context of Bill 98. I wish you had been here because I would have loved to have shared with you my evening of fraternity and sorority with those folks from Castropignano at Club Castropignano down in west Port Robinson last Saturday night.

One of the interesting comments out of it was that there have been some incredible responses coming from government backbenchers and, as has been the norm here for two years plus, government backbenchers will tell but a fraction of the story. One government backbencher stood up here and, by God, wanted to take credit for a 15% increase in automobile sales.

Interjections.

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Mr Kormos: I thought that was interesting, so I checked the data. This government has been eminently successful, this government has been outstandingly successful at isolating increasing amounts of wealth in the hands of fewer and fewer people and creating poverty and despair for vaster and vaster numbers of people at the same time. That has been its agenda.

Increasing car sales: Let's take a look at what car sales increased. I acknowledge that GM enjoyed a 12.9%, 13% increase in car sales. BMW enjoyed a 24% increase in car

sales. That's not the low-ticket items. Porsche, in Mike Harris's Ontario, a 105% increase in sales. You see, there has been a great deal of wealth created in Mike Harris's Ontario, and it's being accumulated by a very select, small group of people at the expense of so many others.

Royal Bank: My God, the Royal Bank, as reported in today's newspapers, set the Canadian profit record this year, the all-time record: \$1.68 billion in profits. How does the Royal Bank respond to these unprecedented profits? By laying off more and more of their staff, of people who work for them, by abandoning the community of Thorold, by pulling out of Schmon Parkway. They were the anchor there. They made a commitment to that development up by Brock University. So how does Royal Bank respond?

The Speaker: Can we clear the galleries, please.

Mr Kormos: I think you should, Speaker. I think you should. Again, there's precedent been set.

How does Royal Bank respond to these new profits? By abandoning the communities that generated those very same profits for them. Well, I've got an answer for the Royal Bank. I want to tell folks about it now.

Last Saturday, before I went up to Club Castropignano in west Port Robinson, I was at the annual general meeting of the Atlas and Civic Employees' Credit Union down at the Ukrainian Cultural Centre. It was the 47th annual meeting, if I remember correctly, of the Atlas and Civic Employees' Credit Union. You know the history of that credit union. It started out as a small, small operation, Atlas Steels employees, workers at Atlas Steels, my family among them, gaining control, just simply saying: "No more. We won't be victims of the big banks." They believed in things like cooperativism. They believed in working together. They believed in pooling their resources.

Ms Boyd was talking about that just a few minutes ago. They knew there was strength in community, and in that community of Atlas Steels workers — originally it was two separate credit unions, obviously, from the name Atlas and Civic Employees', and then the municipal workers. But they realized there was strength in that type of community and they didn't have to let their lives be run by the big banks. They didn't have to generate profits for the big banks by being nickel-and-dimed to death as the banks increasingly do. They could in fact reinvest the profits in their own endeavours.

I recall the history of Atlas and Civic Employees' Credit Union. I've been a member of it for a good chunk of time. From the smallest of beginnings it has become a substantial financial institution down in Niagara region, along with part of the whole family of credit unions, not the biggest, certainly not the smallest, quite frankly from my point of view the best, but I'm sure others who belong to other credit unions would say that about theirs in any event.

There I was at this annual general meeting in the Ukrainian Cultural Centre down on McCabe Street: three vacancies on the board of directors, four candidates, all good people, an illustration of the kind of enthusiasm

people have, and had specifically that evening, to engage in that kind of cooperative endeavour and to take control. This is antithetical to this government's philosophy. They don't believe people should have control down at the community level. They don't believe you can trust democracy.

Speaker, you've heard what this government's had to say about local boards of education. They've held them in disdain. "They can't be trusted. The democratic process can't be utilized when it comes to community governance of education." That's what this government said. This government doesn't believe in democracy. It doesn't believe in community. It doesn't believe in cooperativism. It doesn't believe in people working together to acquire strength. This government isolates people. This government builds barriers. This government builds schisms between communities and between people within those communities.

Interesting. Why, it was just such a short time ago that Shelley Martel, the member for Sudbury East, was admonishing the then Minister of Natural Resources.

Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East): Must be Norm Seabrook.

Mr Kormos: As a matter of fact, and I don't want to diminish her role in the whole matter, she pleaded with him over a nominee to the Niagara Escarpment Commission. I know that she dealt with him privately. She was prepared to deal with it at a confidential level. She dealt with it here in this Legislature not just once, but several times. She dealt with it at the committee. She told the government: "You guys are courting trouble with this actor Seabrook. He's bad news." Ms Martel wasn't trying to make political points.

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth): Oh, no.

Mr Kormos: She wasn't. As the critic responsible for natural resources and as a critic concerned, as are her colleagues in the New Democratic Party, for the future of the Niagara Escarpment Commission, she was sincerely and dearly cautioning this government about the appointment of what was a pro-developer hack with a track record, with a history, with documentation, quotes, positions taken over the course of the last several years that made him entirely unsuitable for the Niagara Escarpment Commission, I suppose, from Ms Martel's point of view. Because, you see, Ms Martel believes in the Niagara Escarpment Commission. She believes that the community is entitled to work together to protect natural resources like the Niagara Escarpment. Ms Martel believes that; New Democrats believe that. I suppose the problem is that the government doesn't. It's a fundamental problem.

This government believes in big banks and big profits for the very wealthy. This government believes in tax cuts for the very rich. This government has done everything to impact and destroy community and cooperative efforts and has done everything to attack and erode and extinguish local democracy.

It wasn't inappropriate during the course of the megacity debate — what was the name of the citizens' group that developed? It was called Citizens for Local

Democracy. It was antithetical to this government. Local democracy is the enemy of this government. Local democracy is contrary to what this government believes in. Go through the list, Joseph Stalin et al. They believed in centralization. They believed in consolidating power at the top. They believed in using the most brutal tactics to ensure their goals were achieved, notwithstanding what people said out on the street, out in neighbourhoods, out in communities. This government has adopted some rather peculiar models, wouldn't you think, Speaker? Some rather strange models indeed.

Ms Martel exhorted the then Minister of Natural Resources to please reconsider the appointment of Norm Seabrook.

Mr Bradley: One of Bill's boys.

Ms Martel: A very good friend.

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Mr Kormos: I've got to get to the point here about Norm Seabrook, a former member of the Niagara Escarpment Commission, touted by Bill Murdoch, onetime dissident, onetime hero — hero merely in the past tense — in the Tory caucus.

Have you read the press clippings today? Speaker, you're undoubtedly going to read a great deal of incredible support from local press for members Toni Skarica and Gary Carr. The local press — Burlington, Hamilton — are indicating that any number of communities, oh sure, would like to have a cabinet minister representing their riding, but as the Burlington Post said, "It's nice to have a local MPP named to a cabinet post" — they're talking about Gary Carr — "but if the price for that means they won't stand up and be counted for the crucial votes, then we'll take a backbencher like Carr any day of the week." That's what the Burlington news had to say about Gary Carr. In the Hamilton Spectator, similar praise for the independence and the independent-mindedness of Skarica and Carr.

Mr Bradley: They tried to put the boots to them before the vote.

Mr Kormos: A whipping? The whip was just a-cracking. I'm not going to be overly praiseful for Carr and Skarica. How many hours prior to their independent stand on 152 were they part of the unprecedented full caucus presence for the support for Bill 160? A whipping like that this place has never seen. You were interviewed by the press. You, Speaker, were questioned, "Has it ever happened before?" I don't recall your exact comments, I don't recall specifically which press reported them, but it clearly was an unprecedented phenomenon for such an unpopular piece of legislation, Bill 160, to have every single backbench member from the Tory caucus present. That was one fine whip that was undertaken that day. You could hear the crack all the way down at Maple Leaf Gardens. You could hear that whip snapping; you could hear it slice the air before it hit the flesh. That was one heck of a whipping.

I tell you, this caucus has been a little bloodied and bruised as a result of it. It doesn't do great things for morale, nor does it do great things for their reputation.

Once again it illustrates the disdain that this government has for democracy, the disdain that this government has for the role of individual members.

This government abhors democratic process. This government has no interest whatsoever in helping people develop democratic bodies within their communities. It has every interest in consolidating more and more power, just like Bill 160 does with respect to education, not here at Queen's Park but in those smoky, dark back rooms of the Premier's office, where the backroom boys, and inevitably they're boys, swing the deals, cut the deals, and determine the future for this province.

I tell you, this government, notwithstanding all of the advice given to it, appointed Norm Seabrook to the Niagara Escarpment Commission. Ms Martel, even at her most anxious moment, didn't anticipate that the crisis would develop so quickly. Within mere — months, Ms Martel? It seemed like mere weeks —

Ms Martel: Maybe three months.

Mr Kormos: — Norm Seabrook showed himself to be the character — I'm being overly generous. The guy's a racist. The guy's an overt, foulmouthed racist.

Mr Bert Johnson: He can't defend himself.

Mrs Boyd: He admitted he said it. Come on.

Mr Kormos: "Nigger in the woodpile" might have been acceptable 60 years ago among some circles.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): It's not acceptable now.

Mr Kormos: But "nigger in the woodpile," as used by Norm Seabrook as a member of the Niagara Escarpment Commission during the course of a commission hearing, I tell you —

Mr O'Toole: Rule him out of order.

The Speaker: Order.

Mr Bert Johnson: I'm offended by that.

The Speaker: The member for Welland-Thorold, I appreciate the comments you're making, but I must say that you're causing disorder and I would ask that you not use those comments any more.

Mr O'Toole: And he always will.

The Speaker: I appreciate your input, member for Durham East, but this isn't a debate with the Speaker.

Mr Kormos: I'm not pleased to have to use that direct quote, and I appreciate your direction and guidance in this regard. I'm not pleased to have to repeat that language. I find it repugnant, I find it racist, I find it contrary to what every fairminded, decent-thinking Ontarian would believe in. I regret having had to be explicit. I'll not utilize the language because I take no pleasure in using the language.

Sadly for all of us, though, that was the turn of phrase that Norm Seabrook, who the Tories fought to get appointed to the Niagara Escarpment Commission, chose to use during the course of a commission hearing. I tell you, Speaker, if it looks like a duck, if it walks like a duck, if it quacks like a duck, it's usually a duck.

Ms Martel warned the minister. She warned the government. She did it privately; she did it confidentially. She finally did it openly, explicitly. Norm Seabrook, still defended by Tory backbencher Bill Murdoch, and I'm

confident resigning only with some great regret, was the Tory appointee, the one, come hell or high water, they were going to get on that Niagara Escarpment Commission, because they've got an agenda. In this case, Norm Seabrook was part of it.

They wanted to stack the Niagara Escarpment Commission with pro-development types — let's cut to the chase — just like they've been stacking district health councils across this province with political hacks who have no purpose on those health councils other than to serve Mike Harris's agenda of demolishing public health care here in the province of Ontario, public health care about which we should be very careful, because a whole lot of generations made a whole lot of sacrifice to build that public health care. We should guard it as rigorously and with as much commitment as they built it, and we should guard it and be prepared to protect it with as much sacrifice as those people made to create it.

District health councils across this province being stacked, the process being circumvented: another illustration of how Mike Harris and his back bench have nothing but disdain for democracy. If they don't like the rules, they either ignore them or they change them. They use the brute force of their majority to simply change them.

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We know what the standard is for appointment to district health councils. It's published; it's part of the process. It's clear. Quite frankly, it's one that served the province well as district health councils acquired increasing amounts of power, first under the leadership of the Liberal government and then under the New Democrats; people like Marion Boyd as Minister of Health —

Mrs Boyd: I wasn't Minister of Health.

Mr Kormos: You should have been — Attorney General — Frances Lankin as Minister of Health, people like this and their leadership, the process was held in regard. Did that mean that every appointment was one that might have left those respective ministers feeling hunkydory? Of course not, but they had regard for the process.

This government ignores the process, has ignored the recommendations of district health councils, Niagara District Niagara District Health Council included, and don't think there's not going to be a price to pay for that because leadership at the Niagara District Health Council has been very vocal about this government's failure.

Mr Frank Sheehan (Lincoln): It's going to take a long time to straighten up that council, Peter.

Mr Kormos: Ah, I hear backbench remarks holding the district health council in disdain — exactly the point I'm trying to make. You guys don't understand democracy. You don't give a tinker's dam about it, and you will either circumvent it or you'll change the rules.

Mr Galt: That was bad language.

Mr Kormos: "Tinker's dam"? I'll explain the origins of that to you later, Speaker.

The Speaker: I'm okay. I didn't know what he said.

Mr Kormos: It's "dam," d-a-m, for the sake of Hansard.

Mr Galt: Why don't you go ahead and explain it to the Speaker.

Mr Kormos: It has an interesting historical origin, as a matter of fact, having to do with tinkers and repairing pots and solder and the use of bread to form a dam for the solder so the solder wouldn't spread across the whole bottom of the pan, so that it would be isolated to the area where the hole is. It's dam as in a beaver's dam.

Norm Seabrook is as illustrative as anybody or any appointment could ever be for this government's regard for institutions that have been carefully crafted over the course of years and decades and generations. I'm not pleased about the greater and greater schism that's growing in this province between the very wealthy and the rest of the folks. I'm not pleased about this government's attack on seniors, on the poor, on kids. I'm not pleased about this government's disdain for democracy. But I tell you that we in this caucus are committed to doing —

The Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough North): Every time I rise in this House I realize that it's an issue of when one should express and get an opportunity to express the views of their constituency and find out that the government itself has restricted the time for individuals to do so. One feels that democracy has been undermined. I think it was Jefferson who said that the worst tyranny one should look at is when the representatives have taken democracy unto their own and have ignored the people who put them there.

In the last two years, what we have seen from this government is a government that feels they must muscle and muzzle their way into everything, first to put the brute force and then to make sure that people do not speak. We have seen how they have done it in their caucus, that they have not allowed them to express their own views.

Interjection: Free vote —

Mr Curling: They have defined "free" in a way that means what they say has to be done. Those bold members who have their own principles, who have spoken out so well, and say they will speak according to the wishes of their constituents in defending that, you can see the pressure, the muscle that is put on those individuals. We've been watching that very carefully. We're watching how they treat those two members.

I want to take this opportunity to commend those two members of the Tory party who have spoken out and voted against the government attitudes. I want to commend them because I think that's what it's all about. Some of the members would say this is a free vote, and we know what that means.

We have seen where time allocation is a way of life here, where they will restrict members of Parliament speaking, but I would say the day will come, and it's coming soon, when this will not happen, that the people themselves will vote this bully government out of power and that they will then start to understand that the wishes of the people will be responded to.

I just want to mention some very bold people who remembered very much the sacrifice one pays to have democracy in any country, who have fought for this,

whose families have died, and I'm sure many members in this House have had family members who have died in wars fighting for democracy, who have had parents and brothers, cousins, relatives who have died fighting for democracy, for freedom of expression, for the vote so that representation of the will of the people can be expressed. Lo and behold, we see a government that actually declared open war on democracy. They were not even secretive about it. They call it a revolution. From what I know about a revolution, it's a war. They went on to say it's a commonsense revolution.

First, what they have done is declared war on the most vulnerable in our society. I've said this before in the House and I'll say it again, because many of the folks at home who are watching may feel rather helpless: How do they defend their own rights? They have allowed people outside who may need some assistance to feed their family, to pay their rent, therefore a system is set up in which to give some subsistence, which we call welfare — the first act of this government when they came was is to attack the most vulnerable in our society. They have cut 22% from their subsistence, and with arrogance, the open, blatant arrogance of this government going on to tell people, "If you can't find money to buy food, go and buy tuna, go and buy dented tuna cans because it is cheaper."

When they came to my constituency office with, and I'm sure when they came to the constituency offices of those opposite, what they stated was that they themselves weren't even allowed to see some of their members. Many of those members came to my constituency, who do not even live in that riding, wanting to express some of the oppressive manner in which this government is dealing with them.

When we come to this House to speak, what do they do? They shut down the time for one to speak. They have closure limiting the time in which to express the feelings of the people in our constituencies. They somehow want to change the calendar and the time we should have. We watch many bills here. I think it's unprecedented, the number of closure motions we have had.

The most frustrating thing too is that members of the same party, of the Mike Harris Conservative Party, who are feeling that frustration aren't able to express that in their own caucus. Some of them have expressed that feeling to me and I empathize with them. Some would gladly come to the Liberal Party because that is where some democracy is seen, where you can express how you feel and feel comfortable about it.

They have two choices. They can leave the party and maybe come over to the Liberal Party, and we will welcome you because we welcome those who have some sort of principle for representation. The fact is, the teachers — I think there were about 30,000 in August 1996 — expressed their views about the way this government was behaving and not allowing them to express their views. But we saw later on, just recently, that the entire 126,000 teachers left the classroom, gave up their salaries to express to this government that it is not speaking on behalf of them and that they are not being

listened to and that, furthermore, it doesn't give the opportunity to members in this House even to speak because it has changed the standing orders to limit that expression.

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They feel they are in here forever, that they can rule forever. Let me tell you the time will come, the time is coming, when the people will speak very loudly. I want to take the opportunity to commend those teachers for standing up to the arrogance of this government. They have told me personally — and they asked me to tell you, lest you have forgotten by their expression of protest and giving up their salary, that they need to be heard — that even if this government passes 160, which it has done, this is not the end of it all. They're going to make sure that every single one of you is targeted — that's the Conservative government, the Mike Harris bully government — to make sure that individuals like people in the Conservative Party do not return. I agree with them and I say to them that it's not only the teachers who are speaking; it's the parents who felt shut out of this process, who felt that their views could not be heard.

There's a pattern to this arrogance here. The pattern this government has shown from the beginning is to call any individuals who express their views as special interest groups and then dismiss them. So they are trying to dismiss those 126,000 people who are intelligent, quite organized and have a passion for contribution to their province in the field of education. The fact is that when they were denied that, they were stamped on and trampled by the arrogance of this government.

Now they're trying to organize the time to say, "Let's change the calendar so we can ram the things through." As a matter of fact, they feel very strongly that the province could be better governed without people. They feel that the people should just go away: "Let us get on with our job. Let us get on with handing over the things to our interest groups so we can let them run the show without the people." But the system will outlast many of us here because the democratic process is in place, and when you try to unseat that it comes back to haunt you. It will haunt every single one of you here.

Many times, when I was a minister, I would have liked to move my agenda a bit faster, and in doing so I realized I had left the people behind. But I realize that the importance of the contribution and the interests of those individuals must be recognized. Often, the more I listen the more I learn and realize I could be totally wrong, because what we are trying to do is put policy in place so

it can react and deal with the interests of the people we govern. This government is not interested at all in that. What this government is solely interested in doing is to rule with an iron hand and ram things through, to change the rules to associate with their agenda. But the agenda of the people will rule over and beyond what you are trying to do.

The opposition has a role to play in this House no matter how you change these rules. We have a role to bring to you some of those attitudes that people are complaining about in the constituencies all across this province. To govern a province like Ontario, which is so diverse in many respects, from the rural to the urban to the various multicultural groups that want to feel a part of this society — to feel they have been shut out is one of the worst things that could ever happen in any democracy, and to change the rules so that you can do whatever you want will not see the light of day for long.

While many of you would like to see individuals like us go away, we are here to stay. We are here to make sure that the thousands and thousands of petitions that come forth to here will be read, telling you they do not agree with the way the government is going.

I'm in Scarborough North, as you know, and many of the petitions I'm getting are coming from beyond Scarborough North. When I ask them why they do not go to Mr Gilchrist's riding to give him the petitions, they feel they are not being represented. "Why don't you go to Mrs Mushinski's riding?" They say, "They don't want to read our petitions." They say they have no proper representation and they want to be heard. I ask, "What about Mr Brown?" They say, "A fine gentleman, but we hope the petitions we bring forward will be read." And there is Mr Newman.

They say to themselves, "What have we done in electing these individuals so they could represent us?" I say to them: "My doors are open all the time. Come right in to my constituency office. I will bring forth the petitions here and I will read them, and when I get the opportunity to speak" — like now — "I will speak to tell them that their representation in their constituency is wanting."

Therefore, in the next hour in which I get to speak, I will continue to tell the people, "If your representation is not that which you are comfortable with, vote Liberal and vote often."

The Speaker: It now being 9:30 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock on Monday.

The House adjourned at 2129.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon / L'hon Hilary M. Weston

Speaker / Président: Hon / L'hon Chris Stockwell

Clerk / Greffier: Claude L. DesRosiers

Clerk Assistant / Greffière adjointe: Deborah Deller

Clerks at the Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Algoma	Wildman, Bud (ND)	Halton North / -Nord	Chudleigh, Ted (PC)
Algoma-Manitoulin	Brown, Michael A. (L)	Hamilton Centre / -Centre	Christopherson, David (ND)
Beaches-Woodbine	Lankin, Frances (ND)	Hamilton East / -Est	Agostino, Dominic (L)
Brampton North / -Nord	Spina, Joseph (PC)	Hamilton Mountain	Pettit, Trevor (PC)
Brampton South / -Sud	Clement, Hon / L'hon Tony (PC) Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports	Hamilton West / -Ouest	Ross, Lillian (PC)
	Preston, Peter L. (PC)	Hastings-Peterborough	Danford, Harry (PC)
Brant-Haldimand	Johnson, Ron (PC)	High Park-Swansea	Shea, Derwyn (PC)
Brantford	Fisher, Barbara (PC)	Huron	Johns, Helen (PC)
Bruce	Jackson, Hon / L'hon Cameron (PC) Minister without Portfolio (seniors issues) / ministre sans portefeuille (Affaires des personnes âgées)	Kenora	Miclash, Frank (L)
Burlington South / -Sud	Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Kingston and The Islands / Kingston et Les Îles	Gerretsen, John (L)
	Sterling, Hon / L'hon Norman W. (PC) Minister of the Environment, government House leader / ministre de l'Environnement, leader parlementaire du gouvernement	Kitchener	Wetlaufer, Wayne (PC)
Cambridge	Morin, Gilles E. (L)	Kitchener-Wilmot	Leadston, Gary L. (PC)
Carleton	Carroll, Jack (PC)	Lake Nipigon / Lac-Nipigon	Pouliot, Gilles (ND)
	Wood, Len (ND)	Lambton	Beaubien, Marcel (PC)
Carleton East / -Est	Bisson, Gilles (ND)	Lanark-Renfrew	Jordan, W. Leo (PC)
Chatham-Kent	Cleary, John C. (L)	Lawrence	Cordiano, Joseph (L)
Cochrane North / -Nord	Johnson, Hon / L'hon David (PC) Minister of Education and Training / ministre de l'Éducation et de la Formation	Leeds-Grenville	Runciman, Hon / L'hon Robert W. (PC) Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services / solliciteur général et ministre des Services correctionnels
Cochrane South / -Sud	Silipo, Tony (ND)		Sheehan, Frank (PC)
Cornwall	Castrilli, Annamarie (L)	Lincoln	Boyd, Marion (ND)
Don Mills	Tilson, David (PC)	London Centre / -Centre	Cunningham, Hon / L'hon Dianne (PC) Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for women's issues / ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales, ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Dovercourt	Flaherty, Hon / L'hon Jim (PC) Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail	London North / -Nord	Wood, Bob (PC)
Downsview	O'Toole, John R. (PC)		Tsubouchi, Hon / L'hon David H. (PC) Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations / ministre de la Consommation et du Commerce
Dufferin-Peel	Ecker, Hon / L'hon Janet (PC) Minister of Community and Social Services / ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires	London South / -Sud	Smith, Bruce (PC)
Durham Centre / -Centre	Munro, Julia (PC)	Markham	DeFaria, Carl (PC)
Durham East / -Est	Saunderson, William (PC)		Snobelen, Hon / L'hon John (PC) Minister of Natural Resources / ministre des Richesses naturelles
Durham West / -Ouest	North, Peter (Ind)	Middlesex	Marland, Hon / L'hon Margaret (PC) Minister without Portfolio (children's issues) / ministre sans portefeuille (enfance)
	Hoy, Pat (L)	Mississauga East / -Est	Sampson, Hon / L'hon Rob (PC) Minister without Portfolio (privatization) / ministre sans portefeuille (privatisation)
Durham-York	Crozier, Bruce (L)	Mississauga North / -Nord	
Eglinton	Ford, Douglas B. (PC)		
Elgin	Kells, Morley (PC)	Mississauga South / -Sud	
Essex-Kent	Hastings, John (PC)		
Essex South / -Sud	Stockwell, Hon / L'hon Chris (PC) Speaker / Président	Mississauga West / -Ouest	
Etobicoke-Humber	McLeod, Lyn (L)		
Etobicoke-Lakeshore	Marchese, Rosario (ND)	Muskoka-Georgian Bay / Muskoka-Baie-Georgienne	Grimmett, Bill (PC)
Etobicoke-Rexdale	Vankoughnet, Bill (PC)	Nepean	Baird, John R. (PC)
Etobicoke West / -Ouest	Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Niagara Falls	Maves, Bart (PC)
	Elliott, Brenda (PC)	Niagara South / -Sud	Hudak, Tim (PC)
Fort William	Young, Terence H. (PC)	Nickel Belt	Laughren, Floyd (ND)
Fort York			
Frontenac-Addington			
Grey-Owen Sound			
Guelph			
Halton Centre / -Centre			

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Nipissing	Harris, Hon / L'hon Michael D. (PC) Premier and President of the Executive Council / premier ministre et président du Conseil exécutif	Sarnia	Boushy, Dave (PC)
Norfolk	Barrett, Toby (PC)	Sault Ste Marie / Sault-Sainte-Marie	Martin, Tony (ND)
Northumberland	Galt, Doug (PC)	Scarborough-Agincourt	Phillips, Gerry (L)
Oakville South / -Sud	Carr, Gary (PC)	Scarborough Centre / -Centre	Newman, Dan (PC)
Oakwood	Colle, Mike (L)	Scarborough East / -Est	Gilchrist, Steve (PC)
Oriole	Caplan, David (L)	Scarborough-Ellesmere	Mushinski, Marilyn (PC)
Oshawa	Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Scarborough North / -Nord	Curling, Alvin (L)
Ottawa Centre / -Centre	Patten, Richard (L)	Scarborough West / -Ouest	Brown, Jim (PC)
Ottawa East / -Est	Grandmaître, Bernard (L)	Simcoe Centre / -Centre	Tascona, Joseph N. (PC)
Ottawa-Rideau	Guzzo, Garry J. (PC)	Simcoe East / -Est	McLean, Allan K. (PC)
Ottawa South / -Sud	McGuinty, Dalton (L) Leader of the Opposition / chef de l'opposition	Simcoe West / -Ouest	Wilson, Hon / L'hon Jim (PC) Minister of Energy, Science and Technology / ministre de l'Énergie, des Sciences et de la Technologie
Ottawa West / -Ouest	Cullen, Alex (L)		Bartolucci, Rick (L)
Oxford	Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Sudbury	Martel, Shelley (ND)
Parkdale	Ruprecht, Tony (L)	Sudbury East / -Est	Ramsay, David (L)
Parry Sound	Eves, Hon / L'hon Ernie L. (PC) Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance / vice-premier ministre, ministre des Finances	Timiskaming	Hodgson, Hon / L'hon Chris (PC) Minister of Northern Development and Mines, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines, président du Conseil de gestion
Perth	Johnson, Bert (PC)	Victoria-Haliburton	Witmer, Hon / L'hon Elizabeth (PC) Minister of Health / ministre de la Santé
Peterborough	Stewart, R. Gary (PC)		Kormos, Peter (ND)
Port Arthur	Gravelle, Michael (L)	Waterloo North / -Nord	Arnott, Ted (PC)
Prescott and Russell / Prescott et Russell	Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)	Welland-Thorold	Doyle, Ed (PC)
Prince Edward-Lennox- South Hastings / Prince Edward-Lennox- Hastings-Sud	Fox, Gary (PC)	Wellington	Skarica, Toni (PC)
Quinte	Rollins, E.J. Douglas (PC)	Wentworth East / -Est	Harnick, Hon / L'hon Charles (PC) Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs / procureur général, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones
Rainy River	Hampton, Howard (ND) Leader of the New Democratic Party / chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique	Wentworth North / -Nord	Kwinter, Monte (L)
Renfrew North / -Nord	Conway, Sean G. (L)	Willowdale	Lessard, Wayne (ND)
Riverdale	Churley, Marilyn (ND)		Pupatello, Sandra (L)
S-D-G & East Grenville / S-D-G et Grenville-Est	Villeneuve, Hon / L'hon Noble (PC) Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, minister responsible for francophone affairs / ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales, ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones	Wilson Heights	Duncan, Dwight (L)
St Andrew-St Patrick	Bassett, Hon / L'hon Isabel (PC) Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation / ministre des Affaires civiques, de la Culture et des Loisirs	Windsor-Riverside	Palladini, Hon / L'hon Al (PC) Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism / ministre du Développement économique, du Commerce et du Tourisme
St Catharines	Bradley, James J. (L)	Windsor-Sandwich	Parker, John L. (PC)
St Catharines-Brock	Froese, Tom (PC)	Windsor-Walkerville	Turnbull, Hon / L'hon David (PC) Minister without Portfolio / ministre sans portefeuille
St George-St David	Leach, Hon / L'hon Al (PC) Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement	York Centre / -Centre	Klees, Frank (PC)
		York East / -Est	Sergio, Mario (L)
		York Mills	Kennedy, Gerard (L)
		York-Mackenzie	
		Yorkview	
		York South / -Sud	

A list arranged by members' surnames and including all responsibilities of each member appears in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month.

Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY COMITÉS PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE

Administration of justice / Administration de la justice

Chair / Président: Gerry Martiniuk
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: E.J. Douglas Rollins
Dave Boushy, Bruce Crozier, Peter Kormos,
Gerry Martiniuk, Jerry J. Ouellette, David Ramsay,
E.J. Douglas Rollins, R. Gary Stewart, Bob Wood
Clerk / Greffier: Douglas Arnott

Estimates / Budgets des dépenses

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Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Rick Bartolucci
Rick Bartolucci, Gilles Bisson, John C. Cleary,
Ed Doyle, Helen Johns, Gerard Kennedy,
Trevor Pettit, Wayne Wettlaufer, Terence H. Young
Clerk / Greffière: Rosemarie Singh

Finance and economic affairs / Finances et affaires économiques

Chair / Président: Terence H. Young
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Monte Kwinter, Gerry Phillips, Gilles Pouliot,
E.J. Douglas Rollins, Wayne Wettlaufer
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Tom Froese, Steve Gilchrist, Rosario Marchese,
Julia Munro, John R. O'Toole, Mario Sergio
Clerk / Greffier: Tom Prins

Government agencies / Organismes gouvernementaux

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Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Tony Silipo
Alex Cullen, Michael Gravelle, Bill Grimmett,
Bert Johnson, Floyd Laughren, Dan Newman,
Tony Silipo, Joseph Spina, R. Gary Stewart,
Clerk / Greffier: Douglas Arnott

Legislative Assembly / Assemblée législative

Chair / Président: Joseph N. Tascona
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Gary Fox
Alvin Curling, Carl DeFaria, Gary Fox, Ernie Hardeman,
Gilles E. Morin, Marilyn Mushinski, Peter North,
Lillian Ross, Tony Silipo, Joseph N. Tascona, David Tilson
Clerk / Greffier: Peter Sibenik

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Lyn McLeod, John L. Parker, Bruce Smith
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No. 257A

N° 257A

ISSN 1180-2987

**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

First Session, 36th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Première session, 36^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Monday 8 December 1997

Lundi 8 décembre 1997



Speaker
Honourable Chris Stockwell

Président
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 8 December 1997

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 8 décembre 1997

*The House met at 1331.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

EDUCATION FINANCING

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William): We are beginning to see the future of public education under a Mike Harris government, and what we see is truly frightening. It is a future where there is so little money for textbooks and school supplies and equipment that private citizens and parents feel they must contribute money out of their own pockets to keep their local schools going.

Toni Skarica knows how bad things are already. As the former parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education, he became so concerned about the sad state of equipment in a secondary school he visited that he is donating \$5,000 to help address what he describes as a desperate situation.

Mr Skarica is not the only one who is concerned. Many parents across the province are planning to donate the \$40 a day that they can claim in protest compensation money to their local schools to buy much-needed textbooks and supplies.

Thunder Bay parent councils have been encouraging parents to make a contribution. The parents of the Mississauga People's Forum have started the First Forty campaign to put funds into breakfast programs and art and music supplies that they believe are at risk with the Harris cutbacks. The idea is spreading across the province, being taken up by concerned parents in all parts of Ontario.

The parents' concern is understandable. Mr Skarica's generosity and his concern is admirable, but the Harris government should not be counting on private individuals and parents to make up for the damage caused by their cuts. The Harris government must stop the cuts and provide adequate funding to public education.

NURSING CONFERENCE

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): I was very pleased to have been invited to join with the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario in their two-day conference entitled Health Care Reform: Where Are We Going? As you may know, Madam Speaker, the Registered Nurses' Association takes the point of view that nurses are the most important part of our health care system. They

are the advocates for parents and those who deliver most of the care in the system. They have had the courage the last two years to have an invited conference in which they work with those in the political and in the medical field to look at what is happening with health care reform.

I want to give my congratulations to the president of the RNAO, Charlotte Noesgaard, and the executive director, Doris Grinspun, who this year delivered a conference that was second to none. It allowed the nurses of Ontario, by themselves, to look at all of the issues that face health care today as it undergoes reform, to determine for themselves what is rhetoric and what is real about the promises around reform, not only from the political sphere but also from the various aspects of the medical system itself, the OHA, the OMA and other nurses' associations. I congratulate them on a wonderful conference and look forward to next year.

GIRL GUIDES

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton North): I am pleased and proud to inform the members today about a dinner that I went to recently that was hosted by the Bramalea Division Girl Guides where they announced their adoption of a killer whale named Ripple through the Vancouver Aquarium.

Using photographic identification of physical characteristics, researchers at the aquarium are able to identify individual whales and therefore determine how they hunt, socialize and communicate with each other.

In order to help defray the costs of such research, the Guides donated \$25 a year for which they receive an adoption certificate, a photograph of their adopted whale, an audio tape of the whale communication sounds and a copy of the aquarium newsletter, The Blackfish Sounder, to keep them up to date about killer whale research.

I commend the Bramalea Division Girl Guides for their involvement in this program and for their eagerness to learn everything they can about these whales, including how they live and socialize and some of the potential dangers faced by them and their marine environment.

I also commend their efforts to promote the program among other Guide divisions so that they too can share in the knowledge and the feeling of satisfaction which this program provides.

If there are any groups in other members' ridings that you feel would be interested in participating in this program, I urge you to please contact my office and we'll be

happy to put you in touch with Donna McLean of the Bramalea Girl Guides.

SERVICES FOR THE DISABLED

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur): For almost two years now, I've been fighting on behalf of Veronica Manuel and her multi-disabled son Dylan, two constituents in my Port Arthur riding. I've been fighting for this hard-hearted government to acknowledge that their vicious cuts to social assistance, health care and the disabled in our province will eventually leave people like Ms Manuel no choice but to have their children institutionalized.

Dylan was born with cerebral palsy and a number of medical conditions that require extensive medication, complex equipment and 24-hour care. Dylan cannot walk, talk or hold his head up by himself. His mother, Veronica, who is a registered nurse, spends most of her time caring for her son.

The point is that Veronica loves her son a great deal and wants to keep him at home, because she believes that the love and support he receives at home are what are keeping him alive. But she needs more from this government in order to do that.

Later today Veronica and Dylan will be in the Legislature sitting in the Speaker's gallery. I am standing here now to make a plea to Community and Social Services Minister Ecker that she find some time to meet with Veronica and Dylan, if only briefly, so that Veronica can tell Dylan's story to her face to face. She deserves that, Minister.

Although the minister coldly noted in a recent letter to Veronica that she wished to bring closure to Veronica's concerns, the minister needs to understand that Veronica cannot talk about closure because this is her child. There is no closure for a mother and a child.

Minister, will you show some compassion and meet with Veronica and Dylan today?

NORTHERN ONTARIO DEVELOPMENT

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): On Friday last, the Minister of Northern Development and Mines visited Algoma and Sault Ste Marie for two important meetings, among other things. In the morning he attended at the Garden River to join with Chief Lyle Sayers and former chief Dennis Jones and others in a cheque presentation for the transfer of the lands from the Garden River reserve for the construction of the four-lane highway across the reserve from the Echo Bay area to Sault Ste Marie.

This is a project that has been debated and negotiated and talked about for over 20 years, and I'm glad to see that it's going forward. Unfortunately, I was unable to attend because I was not informed of the meeting until two days previously when I had already committed to be in Chapleau.

The minister also met with Reeve Jim Aquino of the township of Michipicoten, Wawa, in the afternoon in Sault Ste Marie to discuss how the provincial government might

respond initially to the crisis in Wawa as a result of the decision of Algoma Steel Inc to close down the Algoma Ore division in June 1998. The minister presented Mr Aquino with a cheque for \$50,000 as a provincial contribution, along with the federal government and the company —

The Deputy Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Statements.

1340

LAND TRANSFER TAX REBATE

Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Centre): I'm pleased to rise in the House today as the member for Scarborough Centre to inform the House of the tremendous support I have received from residents across the province regarding our government's land transfer tax rebate program.

Our government is working to create jobs, hope, growth and opportunity for all Ontarians, and the land transfer tax rebate program is an initiative that is indeed working to achieve those goals.

The land transfer tax constitutes a significant portion of the closing costs that all first-time home buyers face.

Our government, through this program, is working to ensure that our economy is spurred by the sale of homes. A 1994-95 study commissioned by the Canadian Real Estate Association and the Ontario Real Estate Association reported that \$16,200 is generated by the average housing transaction. Recently an update of that report put the figure at well over \$17,000.

As well, the purchase and sale of homes also generates fees to professionals such as lawyers, appraisers, real estate agents and surveyors, all of which create significant economic activity and jobs. In addition, when individuals move, they typically purchase new appliances, furnishings and other durable goods, as well as undertake renovations to the home, all of which create significant economic activity and, most important, jobs.

Finally, whenever a first-time home buyer purchases a resale home, the seller has to move somewhere, which creates further economic activity in our communities.

My office has been contacted by many Ontarians who want to share —

The Deputy Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Thank you.

NORTHWESTERN ONTARIO ASSOCIATED CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE

Mr Frank Miclash (Kenora): My statement is directed to the Premier. The Premier will know that the Northwestern Ontario Associated Chambers of Commerce has worked closely with provincial governments of all political stripes for the past 62 years.

From 1952 to 1995, NOACC has personally met with the Premier and cabinet of the day, a tradition this current Premier and government have decided to ignore.

Premier, NOACC wrote to you to seek a meeting with them in January or February of next year, as other governments have done since 1952. I must request on their behalf that you agree to this request.

Premier, NOACC's reputation is one of providing well-thought-out briefs on issues of concern to our region.

You stated in the last election that you would provide the opportunity for northern groups and organizations such as NOACC to "play an important role in making the decisions which affect their lives." Thus far, all they have received from you is your Minister of Northern Development's fluffy acknowledgement letters to their position papers.

They believed you when you stated that they and others would be involved in the policy-making process. Now they are calling upon you to keep your promise.

Premier, take this opportunity to show that your commitment in terms of meaningful consultation with northerners was not just political rhetoric. I call on you to set up a meeting between your cabinet and NOACC's executive and directors, as they have requested, this coming January or February.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): The member for Nickel Belt.

TVONTARIO

Mr Floyd Laughren (Nickel Belt): Thank you, Madam Speaker. I congratulate you on your elevation.

On November 24, the privatization of TVO road show came to Sudbury. My colleague from Sudbury East and I went to the same hotel where that road show was being held and held a press conference of our own to talk to people about the perils of privatizing TVO.

Imagine our surprise when constituents kept coming up to us and saying, "Where is the official TVO privatization road show meeting being held?" We said, "Why don't you ask at the desk of this fine hotel." They said, "We did ask at the desk and we were told, 'We can't tell you.'" I said, "That can't be true." So I went to the desk myself and I said, "Where's the TVO meeting?" "We can't tell you." "What do you mean you can't tell us?" "We were told by the Toronto office of the privatization secretariat that we couldn't let the news out as to where the meeting was being held until just about an hour before the meeting begins."

I ask you, what kind of government is it that holds a road show to hear people's views on an issue such as the privatization of TVO and then doesn't tell anybody where it is, refuses to tell anybody where it is? We're told the instructions for that came directly from the minister's office, not from the hotel but right from the minister's office. It's a joke.

JAMES SHAW

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): I will be brief. I want to take this opportunity to congratulate one of my special constituents, Mr James Shaw of Newcastle. Mr

Shaw, a discus, javelin and shot-put competitor, recently was named the recipient of a prestigious Ontario award as the top athlete with a disability.

Multi-sport athlete James Shaw earned two gold medals and a bronze at the Paralympics in Atlanta and three gold medals in the Ontario Games for the Physically Disabled in Peterborough.

At the Paralympics Mr Shaw set a world record with a heave of 41.24 metres in the discus, won a gold medal in the shot-put and a bronze in the javelin — truly remarkable. At the Ontario Games he won three gold medals on each of the discus, javelin and shot-put.

Our Ontario government renewed its commitment to sport and recreation for all athletes in the province by honouring its amateur athletes for sports achievements in 1996 at the 30th annual Ontario Sports Awards ceremony held this fall.

I ask the members of the Legislature and the assembly to join with me today in recognizing and congratulating Jim Shaw and the other exceptional individuals for their outstanding achievements as amateur athletes. Jim is truly an inspiration for each and every one of us in this House today.

VISITORS

The Deputy Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): I would like to inform the members of the Legislative Assembly that we have in the Speaker's gallery today the Honourable Umberto Aimola, Speaker of the Regional Parliament of Abruzzo, Italy. Also, please welcome Mr Odoardo Di Santo, former member of the provincial Parliament for Downsview. Please join me in welcoming our guests.

CONSIDERATION OF LEGISLATION

The Deputy Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Last week, the member for Algoma (Mr Wildman) raised a point of order with respect to the admissibility of Bill 164, An Act to implement job creation measures and other measures contained in the 1997 Budget and to make other amendments to statutes administered by the Ministry of Finance or relating to taxation matters, in light of the pending consideration of Bill 149. The member for Scarborough-Agincourt (Mr Phillips) and the government House leader contributed to the discussion of this issue. In addition, later that same week, the member for Fort William (Mrs McLeod) raised a similar point concerning the relationship of Bill 164 to Bill 160, and this week the Chair received additional written and oral submissions.

Members cited standing order 51, which states: "No motion, or amendment, the subject matter of which has been decided upon, can be again proposed during the same session." The interpretation of this standing order is that the House may not revisit substantially the same question twice in the same session. That is, having decided upon something once, the matter cannot again be raised. The interpretation of this standing order, however, is quite

restrictive and there are many examples of debates on variations of the same or similar subject matters being debated more than once in a session.

Indeed, on April 22, the Chair ruled on a similar question being raised relating to a time allocation motion on Bill 104. Allowing a second time allocation motion at that time underscores the very tight and restrictive interpretation that standing order 51 undergoes when these questions are raised.

In short, if a matter before the House is not substantially the same, or identical, to one already decided upon, it is not prohibited from being considered. What the House cannot do under this standing order is put itself in a position of voting on a question that is, for all intents and purposes, identical to one already dealt with.

Now let me relate the standing order to the passage of legislation. Section 3 of the Statutes Act states that,

"Any act may be amended, altered or repealed by an act passed in the same session of the Legislature." Further, in the 21st edition of Erskine May on page 470 it states: "There is now no rule against the amendment or repeal of an act of the same session. Formerly it was expressly disallowed, but it has been permissible since 1850." These references are not incompatible with standing order 51. Standing order 51 seeks to prevent two bills that are substantially the same from being considered in the same session. Its purpose is not to prevent consideration of legislation which further amends any bill passed in the same session.

1350

The Chair has also reviewed the 1968 ruling of Speaker Lamoureux at the House of Commons of Canada. In that case, the Speaker found a bill out of order because certain of its clauses were identical to those defeated in a previous bill at third reading. This ruling served as a guideline to the Chair because, while he found the bill out of order based on the identical clauses, he also stated that in at least one case the fact that a clause contained similar provisions to those in the previous bill "is not sufficient to justify a ruling that they are out of order."

In view of the foregoing, with respect to Bill 164, the Chair had to determine whether Bill 164 or any part of it is substantially the same as Bill 149 or Bill 160. The Chair has reviewed Bill 164 and cannot find that the changes it seeks to make to Bills 149 and 160, in their eventual existence as statutes, are changes that revisit prior decisions of this House. While Bill 164 certainly makes amendments to other bills, the Chair is not convinced that it is virtually the same bill or indeed that it contains identical clauses.

Finally, I want to address the point that since both Bill 149 and Bill 160 were time-allocated, the deadline for amendment had passed, thereby rendering legislation that seeks to make further amendments out of order. The Chair disagrees. The deadlines set by the time allocation motions were specific to the consideration of the various stages of those bills. The deadlines were not imposed in perpetuity for any future consideration of the legislation. An act can be amended by subsequent legislation regardless of the

terms of the passage of the original act. Obviously, this new legislation is subject to the usual scrutiny and opportunity for debate or amendment.

For these reasons, I find that Bill 164 is in order.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): On a point of order, Madam Speaker: I thank the Speaker for the ruling and I just ask if you would entertain a question that you might like to consider. In your ruling, Speaker, you have repeated in terms of the standing orders and Erskine May the statement that an act can be amended subsequently by a bill in the same session, as long as they are not identical, and I understand your ruling.

The small point I would like to raise a question about is that when Bill 164 was introduced on the order paper the legislation it was attempting to modify and to amend was not acts, not statutes. It was bills before this House that could then be amended in the House by referring the matter to committee of the whole House, and you might argue that that was precluded because of the time allocation motions. Time allocation motions, as you indicated in your ruling, could be superseded by a subsequent time allocation motion. My question simply is, while citing that acts can be amended by further bills in the same session, are you also saying that bills that have not been passed into law can also be amended prior to actually being law by another bill?

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): On the same point of order, Madam Speaker: Timing obviously is everything in the contention that is being made by the opposition in this particular case. As my friend the member for Algoma has aptly pointed out, we fully understand that when a bill has already passed the Legislature, when it is an act of the Ontario Legislature, a subsequent bill would be able to amend that. That's understandable.

The contention we come back to as an opposition is that those bills had not been passed by the Legislature and in fact all the government was doing was using a device, that is, an omnibus bill, in which they could include many unrelated matters, as I think some of these are unrelated in this particular case, to avoid going to committee of the whole, which is the appropriate venue to make amendments to the two bills that were in question, Bill 160 and Bill 149.

It seems to me what we have in this Legislature, if this ruling is as I understand it, is that the government is now going to be able to avoid going to committee of the whole simply by starting anew another bill to amend bills which have not yet passed the Legislature. To me, that's a rather backward way of doing it and an inappropriate way of doing it and, I would suggest, somewhat undemocratic.

The Deputy Speaker: Just give me a moment here.

The House is recessed for 10 minutes.

The House recessed from 1358 to 1411.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much for your indulgence while I conferred with the Clerk. As I understand it, the question raised by the member for Algoma and the member for St Catharines was whether Bill 164 is out of order because it was introduced prior to royal assent being given to Bills 160 and 149. After careful considera-

tion and discussions, I've come to the conclusion that this would only be an impediment to Bill 164 passing before the enactment of Bills 149 and 160, but it does not prevent Bill 164 from being introduced and considered.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

TORONTO HOSPITAL ACT, 1997

LOI DE 1997 SUR L'HÔPITAL DE TORONTO

Mr Gilchrist moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 172, An Act to amalgamate The Toronto Hospital and The Ontario Cancer Institute and to amend the Cancer Act / Projet de loi 172, Loi visant à fusionner l'Hôpital de Toronto et l'Institut ontarien du cancer et à modifier la Loi sur le cancer.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East): The purpose of the bill will be to amalgamate the Toronto Hospital and the Ontario Cancer Institute, otherwise known as the Princess Margaret Hospital, under the name of the Toronto Hospital. It's my understanding that we have all-party support to give second and third reading for this bill later today.

I would just like to point out to the members that we have Dr Alan Hudson, the president and CEO of the Toronto Hospital and Princess Margaret, as well as Ms Bella Martin, legal counsel and director of medical affairs of the two hospitals, with us in the gallery here today.

I look forward to the members' comments on this bill later this afternoon.

JAMAICAN CANADIAN ASSOCIATION ACT, 1997

Mr Sergio moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr94, An Act respecting the Jamaican Canadian Association.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Northern Development and Mines): I move, notwithstanding standing order 96(d), Mr Guzzo and Mr Grimmiett exchange places in the order of precedence for private members' public business.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

DEFERRED VOTES

DEVELOPMENT CHARGES ACT, 1997

LOI DE 1997 SUR LES REDEVANCES D'AMÉNAGEMENT

Deferred vote on the motion for third reading of Bill 98, An Act to promote job creation and increased municipal accountability while providing for the recovery of development costs related to new growth / Projet de loi 98, Loi visant à promouvoir la création d'emplois et à accroître la responsabilité des municipalités tout en prévoyant le recouvrement des coûts d'aménagement liés à la croissance.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): There will be a five-minute bell. Call in the members.

The division bells rang from 1416 to 1421.

The Deputy Speaker: All those in favour of the motion, please rise one at a time.

Ayes

Amott, Ted	Hardeman, Ernie	Palladini, Al
Baird, John R.	Harnick, Charles	Parker, John L.
Barrett, Toby	Hastings, John	Pettit, Trevor
Beaubien, Marcel	Hodgson, Chris	Preston, Peter
Brown, Jim	Hudak, Tim	Rollins, E.J. Douglas
Carr, Gary	Jackson, Cameron	Runciman, Robert W.
Chudleigh, Ted	Johns, Helen	Saunderson, William
Clement, Tony	Johnson, Bert	Shea, Derwyn
Cunningham, Dianne	Johnson, David	Sheehan, Frank
Danford, Harry	Johnson, Ron	Skarica, Toni
DeFaria, Carl	Jordan, W. Leo	Smith, Bruce
Doyle, Ed	Kells, Morley	Snobelen, John
Ecker, Janet	Klees, Frank	Spina, Joseph
Eves, Ernie L.	Leach, Al	Stewart, R. Gary
Fisher, Barbara	Leadston, Gary L.	Tilson, David
Flaherty, Jim	Marland, Margaret	Tsubouchi, David H.
Ford, Douglas B.	Martiniuk, Gerry	Tumbull, David
Fox, Gary	McLean, Allan K.	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Froese, Tom	Munro, Julia	Wilson, Jim
Galt, Doug	Mushinski, Marilyn	Witmer, Elizabeth
Gilchrist, Steve	Newman, Dan	Wood, Bob
Grimmett, Bill	O'Toole, John	Young, Terence H.
Guzzo, Garry J.	Ouellette, Jerry J.	

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed, please stand one at a time.

Nays

Bartolucci, Rick	Gravelle, Michael	McLeod, Lyn
Boyd, Marion	Hampton, Howard	Miclash, Frank
Bradley, James J.	Hoy, Pat	Morin, Gilles E.
Caplan, David	Kennedy, Gerard	Patten, Richard
Cleary, John C.	Kwinter, Monte	Phillips, Gerry
Colle, Mike	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Pupatello, Sandra
Conway, Sean G.	Laughren, Floyd	Ramsay, David
Curling, Alvin	Lessard, Wayne	Sergio, Mario
Duncan, Dwight	Marchese, Rosario	Silipo, Tony
Gerretsen, John	Martel, Shelley	Wildman, Bud

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 68; the nays are 30.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried. Resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

ORAL QUESTIONS

HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Gerard Kennedy (York South): I have a question for the Minister of Health. The people of northwest Toronto today got information about their hospital services and they got it in an unusual form, Minister. You'll be aware there was a full-page ad telling the people who use North York Branson that if they arrive in the night hours by car, will they be treated by the emergency department? The answer is no.

Minister, 18 months ahead of the time that your hospital closing commission said, North York Branson is forced to close its overnight emergency services. It is forced to close it not because of the board of the hospital, which held an emergency meeting yesterday, another one today, I understand with your officials, but because of the chaos that your ministry has created. There is no plan to ensure the doctors and nurses needed to provide emergency services will have a place once this hospital eventually closes or changes itself to ambulatory services. There is no plan —

The Deputy Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Question, please.

Mr Kennedy: — for these services to go elsewhere because those other hospitals haven't done their renovations. Will you be able to guarantee emergency services for the people who had to read that ad this weekend?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health): Yes, we certainly are fully aware of the situation at North York Branson Hospital and the fact that it has closed the night-time emergency department. In fact, as you know, last week they issued a press release indicating that indeed was going to happen. That was part of their efforts to ensure that people in that community know of the change in the treatment that is going to be available to them and that during the nights, from 10 to 8, they will not be open.

As you've just indicated, officials from the Ministry of Health have been meeting with the North York Branson Hospital and they will be continuing to meet today. Certainly we will do everything possible to ensure that first-class quality patient care will continue to be delivered as we go through the transition stage.

Mr Kennedy: Minister, that quality care is only possible if people know what to expect in terms of the hospital. The blue sign is being taken down outside North York Branson. I don't know how you can ensure that quality care is going to be there. It's not going to be a hospital 18 months ahead of the time that your hospital closing commission said it should shut down. You had correspondence from this hospital in April of this year and September of this year. They told you it was because of the great uncertainty caused by the decisions that you made, and no doubt the 12% cuts in their budget don't help either.

Minister, will you act to deal with these problems? You know that in Windsor closing of emergency rooms created great problems and you have a report to tell you how

serious those problems were, that the facilities were inadequate, inefficient and unsafe.

The surrounding hospitals have not had time to do their renovations. Part of Branson will shut down. You're told by the head of the board that you ought not presume stability.

The Deputy Speaker: Question, please.

Mr Kennedy: Can you tell us specifically how you will take responsibility and make sure that those quality services are there for the people who had to read this ad in the paper this weekend?

Hon Mrs Witmer: Again I indicate to you that the ad in the paper was simply part of the ongoing communication to ensure that people knew about the changes that were taking place.

I just want to stress again that patients will still be able to access full-service emergency facilities at the York-Finch site of the Humber River Regional and the North York General as well. I think we also need to remember that the Humber River Regional has already increased its emergency room capacity from 54 stretchers to 67 stretchers in order to deal with the conversion. So there are some changes already going on, but as you know as well, the commission has also taken the opportunity to review the human resource report, a draft they have received from Mr Pathe. Again, it's going to be up to them to direct hospitals how to continue to deal with the staffing problems, so I am very confident that quality patient care will continue to be provided to those patients who use the hospitals.

1430

Mr Kennedy: It's not good enough for you to be confident down here at Queen's Park. Out there in the real world, people are not able to access emergency services the way they need to. Your ministry knew about this in April. They knew about it in September. You have told 30 hospitals across this province to close, and there is no plan to tell doctors and nurses, whom people are depending on, where they will go, what their careers will be, and some of them are now acting and they are moving to other hospitals.

The situation in Branson can be happening over and over again in this province. Two specific things: Will you assure the people who are served by Branson, many disproportionately elderly, in telling them there's a hospital somewhere away? It may look good on a map, but it's not real for them. Will you do something about Branson? Will you provide some funding? Will you make sure the staff get appointments to hospitals so that this uncertainty can be lifted? As you have been told, they could be unstable, the whole emergency could close, and many other services could close as well.

Will you announce the date when we will have a human resources adjustment strategy so that this chaos that you and Premier Harris and your predecessor have brought to this province can be dealt with properly?

Hon Mrs Witmer: I certainly understand the concerns of the individuals who use North York Branson. Again I would indicate to you that was part of the communication that was received this weekend. We will continue to

monitor the situation at Branson very closely; in fact, as I said before, our staff are meeting with them, and as I said to you in my last answer, and now you've made reference to it, there is a human resource report. It is a draft at the present time, and there will be directions coming very soon as to how to deal with all those issues, so there is a plan in place that is being developed, and I can assure you we will have quality patient care for each and every individual.

CHARITABLE GAMING

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a question for the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations. In response to a question I asked you last week, you stated you would not force the new Mike Harris gambling halls on to municipalities that did not want them. Since then, we have learned that your former aide and Mike Harris employee Paul Burns, acting on behalf of RPC Gaming, arranged to meet with Toronto councillor Judy Sgro and told her that RPC Gaming already has a contract with the Harris government and that charitable casinos in Metro were a done deal. In fact, the councillor said the following:

"She said she told Burns that since voters had indicated in the referendum that they didn't want charity casinos anywhere in the city, she wasn't inclined to work with him on a location.

"So he said to me, 'You don't understand. We have a contract with the province to put a casino into North York and since it's going to happen, I'd like to work with you.'"

How do you square that with the answer you gave in the House the other day, that you do not intend to force upon municipalities these new permanent gambling halls?

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations): First of all, I'll just reiterate what I have said before and what I have been saying for the last several months, and I don't think it's new news to anybody: We have clearly said we wouldn't force any communities to take a charity gaming club that didn't want one.

Second, I suppose I should comment on the article the member for St Catharines was reading. I guess this is a wonderful piece of work of journalistic reporting. Instead of going to the source, I suppose Mr Burns, who apparently denies he said that — it says here, "So he said to me...." Here's hearsay, I guess. It certainly wouldn't be admissible in a court. It's gossip and certainly rumoury.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Order, please, member for Oakwood.

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: I can only reiterate our position, which is very clear. We've said clearly we will not force any community to take a charity gaming club that did not want one.

Mr Bradley: I think it's quite clear what Mr Burns is up to. First of all, we have to know that Mr Burns is a former employee of yours, a former aide to you as

Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations. He also worked for Mike Harris when he was the leader of the Conservative Party. He obviously has a lot of clout and a lot of connections, so when he speaks, it must mean that he has those connections with the government and he knows of what he speaks.

Will you today reveal to the hundreds of thousands of Ontarians who voted against gambling expansion, that is, against the charity casinos in the last municipal election, what commitment you have made to RPC Gaming as it relates to the new Mike Harris gambling halls?

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: The member keeps asking the same question over and over again in different ways. Once again the short answer to all of this is the answer we've been saying all along. We will not force any community to take a charity gaming club that does not want one.

Mr Burns doesn't work for me right now. Mr Burns, when he left — and this was a question that was raised about three or four times in the House. I'll answer it the same way as I did before; apparently it's not new news again. Mr Burns spoke to the Integrity Commissioner. The Integrity Commissioner gave him a clean bill of health. Mr Burns does not speak on behalf of this government; we do.

Applause.

Mr Bradley: Obviously you get applause for a non-answer because he didn't tell me what was in the contract. I thought you people in the family values coalition of the government would want to know what's in that gambling contract to set up the new Mike Harris gambling halls across Ontario.

Right across the country there is a lot of concern being expressed, not just in this province, but in other provinces, in other jurisdictions, about the proliferation of new and different gambling opportunities that really affect those who are the most desperate in our society or those who are addicted. Isn't it time that the Mike Harris government decided to embark upon a moratorium on this new expansion of video lottery terminals across the province, of these charity casinos for which I believe you are trying to go over the electorate who expressed their views in the referendum, to go and try to persuade the local councillors to approve?

You're putting pressure on through the charities. You're trying to intimidate, you're trying to bribe by saying they're going to \$1,500 per video lottery terminal. Isn't it time to call a moratorium and reassess this policy and look at the damage that is being done by this expansion of gambling opportunities in our province?

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: I guess I should refer to last Thursday, which wasn't such a long time ago, where I said we're very clear. We've been very clear all along that we would not force any community that did not want to have a charity gaming club to have a charity gaming club. That's pretty clear.

Let's put this in perspective again. The member for St Catharines is referring to a former employee, but let's look at who gave the quote.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please.

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: Judy Sgro, who gave the quote, ran for the Liberal cousins in the last federal election and lost to John Nunziata. Here's a really objective person who's talking here. Let's also bring this into a little perspective again. I think the member is familiar with what Jennifer Patrick of the St Catharines Downtown Association said, that, "A charity gaming casino anywhere in the region will probably help all of Niagara."

1440

EDUCATION FINANCING

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of Education and Training. In just three short weeks, the 72 new boards of education have to assume responsibility for the schools in their geographic area, yet they still don't know what their budgets will be, an incredibly absurd situation. They have to be up and running in three weeks and you still haven't told them what their budgets will be.

Minister, will you tell the parents, the students and the teachers today what funding you're going to provide those new boards in the new year and will you guarantee to them today that you're not going to be cutting their budgets from what they otherwise would have been?

Hon David Johnson (Minister of Education and Training): The leader of the third party knows well that on January 1 the school boards will be receiving stable funding. This has been announced by the previous minister and I have reiterated that support. I quote again from the letter that was sent out in April that for the 1997-98 school year — that is, the year ending August 1998 — the government will continue to provide in grants and taxes the level of funding the system was receiving in 1997.

Once that period of time is completed, then on September 1, 1998, the new funding formula will kick in. The government is working on that new formula and that new formula will be announced over the next short period of time. But that doesn't begin until September 1998, which is many months from now.

Mr Hampton: Minister, if it were so simple, why haven't you sent out the funding formula to the boards? Why did you promise them the funding formula back in October and yet you have not as yet sent them their budgets? Why do boards of education not know whether junior kindergarten is going to be included in those budgets or not? Why do schools in the Toronto area not know whether or not they're going to receive funding adequate to cover the needs of students who speak a different language at home and are trying to learn English at school? What is it that your government can't come clean about?

If the formula is as it was, if there aren't going to be any cuts, why haven't you told the 72 boards of education across this province exactly what their funding formula is and exactly what their budget is? Can you tell us, Minister, why your government insists on keeping this behind closed doors, why you're trying to keep the boards in the dark? If you know the numbers, announce them so that the

boards of education will know what they have to finance the education of children. Tell them today.

Hon David Johnson: The government did release earlier this year the booklet entitled Excellence in Education: Student-focused Funding for Ontario. There has been a consultation process before that time, during that time and after that time with the various school boards. The government has outlined its initiative in terms of a foundation grant which includes learning materials, classroom teachers, teachers' assistants, classroom computers, preparation time, library services, guidance and other professionals, which would include psychologists or psychiatrists or speech pathologists, for example. There are special purpose grants that are outlined in this document.

The precise amounts of money are being worked with the various school board officials. This formula does not kick in until September 1998.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Order. Answer, please.

Hon David Johnson: The school boards will have that level of detail. We're working with them. They'll have that level of detail in plenty of time for September 1998.

Mr Hampton: Here is the absurdity of the situation: The minister stands here day after day and says that the funding will be as it was. But he is creating a situation where the new boards of education, which have to be up and running within 23 days, still don't know how much money they're going to have to work with. Does the minister not see the absurdity of the situation? Do you not see how unfair this is to parents, how unfair it is to students, how unfair it is to teachers to not tell people what funding they are going to have to work with?

Minister, it's a simple question. You say it's not a problem. If it's not a problem, stand on your feet today, tell the 72 boards of education what the funding formula is, show them how much money they have and guarantee them that you're not cutting the budgets, cutting the funding that they otherwise would have. If you have all the answers, tell the people. Tell the people who care about education what those answers are, and tell them today.

Hon David Johnson: It's apparent that the leader of the third party is talking about the stub year, and again I will say that this government has committed to stable stub-year funding in terms of the taxes, the grants, but there are different circumstances. One of his colleagues, from Fort York I guess it was, outlined some of the slightly different circumstances that vary from board to board. While the boards can be guaranteed stable funding, we are in the midst right now and coming to the final stages of fine-tuning to determine fairness for all the boards right across Ontario, that indeed the stub-year funding does reflect that stability, those grants, those taxes that each board, under slightly different circumstances, should have access to. The government is working on that. They can be guaranteed the amount of money they need to carry on the programs, and the details will be out very shortly. But the boards know they have that stable funding. They've been

planning on that right from the word go earlier in the year, through their whole calendar and fiscal year.

YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): I have a question for the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism. As I understand it, he also now assumes some responsibility especially with respect to the unemployment situation among younger workers.

Minister, I understand the Premier is going to go to a first ministers' conference at the end of this week and he is supposed to be putting some ideas on the table as to how you're going to address the very high rate of unemployment among young people.

I held a little conference a couple of weeks ago where we brought together about 200 young people from across the province and they put some ideas on the table. They said, for one, the province could implement a better employment standards law, better enforcement of the employment standards laws and a provincial bad-boss hotline to prevent the exploitation of young workers. Second, they said that the government should find a way to create a better balance between stressed-out, overworked older workers and work-starved younger workers.

Minister, can you tell us, is the Premier going to put any ideas like this on the table at the premiers' conference? Is he going to put any new ideas on the table and can you tell us what they are?

Hon Al Palladini (Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism): I would like to thank the member for the question, but I also want to share some information that he should know, but obviously he does not. First of all, the youth unemployment rate has been steadily dropping for the past eight months and we're certainly on the right track. But even where it is right now, it's still unacceptable and I agree with the member.

We recently launched a program for young entrepreneurs which our government is very proud of. We believe we're on the right track to certainly stimulate youth employment. There's a lot to do and I think there is a lot to talk about with the federal government.

I am willing to work with the federal government to see how we can work together to see how we can eliminate youth unemployment. It's definitely a problem. I know my Premier will be discussing with the federal counterparts to see how we can address that. The previous government did not address this issue, and we are.

Mr Hampton: I asked the minister if this government had any new ideas for dealing with youth unemployment and what I think I got was the minister believes that 15% unemployment among young people is doing better. I think that's what he said. Other than that, I didn't hear any new ideas.

Minister, I want to take you up on one of the things that's happening out there under your government. This morning in Sault Ste Marie my colleague Tony Martin, the member for Sault Ste Marie, attended a news conference to protest that Sears is laying off full-time workers with

seniority of 25 to 30 years and they're going to hire young workers on a part-time basis to replace the permanent employees they're putting out the door.

You know what that does, Minister. That allows you to say that unemployment is coming down, because your government can then say, "Well, we created two jobs for young people." Are these your new ideas, your good ideas? You lay off permanent older workers and bring younger workers in on a part-time basis. Is that your new idea for younger workers?

Hon Mr Palladini: I'm really disappointed in the leader of the third party because he was part of the government that totally destroyed employment in Ontario. Youth employment in the province is up by 43,000.

Interjection.

Hon Mr Palladini: Yes, it has been declining in the past six months because of the initiatives this government is taking. But I want to agree with the member that it's not good enough. We want to do better and we are going to do better.

1450

Mr Hampton: Once again a minister who believes that 15% unemployment among young people is acceptable I think indicates the true thinking of this government.

I hoped I would hear from you some new ideas about how you're going to deal with the problem of young people who are graduating from college and university with \$25,000 in education debts and can't get a job. Instead, when I read what your government is doing, I find you're going the other way. I find that you're actually cutting funding for training and apprenticeships, and Veronica Lacey's performance contract indicates that you're going to start charging young people tuition fees to even get involved in apprenticeships.

Minister, these aren't new ideas; these are wrong ideas. They are ideas that will make it more difficult for young people to get into the job market. Can you tell us, do you have any new ideas whatsoever that you're going to take to the Prime Minister's conference? Do you have any ideas whatsoever that are going to help young people get the training they need, the apprenticeships they need and, most of all, the jobs they need? Give us the new ideas.

Hon Mr Palladini: New ideas I shared with the member. The one we just launched, the young entrepreneur program, is certainly a new idea where we get buy-ins from the private sector, the young entrepreneur and the provincial government. That's a new idea. There is more that we can do, but contrary to what you did while you were the government, our job creation programs are going to create jobs.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Member for Oriole, come to order, please.

Hon Mr Palladini: At the end of our mandate we're going to create those jobs that we said we would in the Common Sense Revolution.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): Oh, never mind. That's going to help young people, isn't it.

The Deputy Speaker: Member for Kingston and The Islands, come to order.

Hon Mr Palladini: That is 725,000 jobs that we are going to create, contrary to what you did in five years in government. You lost 10,000 net jobs. We're not going to do that.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Mr Hampton: Madam Speaker, on a point of order: The minister should go back to transportation. He talked more about potholes.

The Deputy Speaker: That is not a point of order.

WINTER HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew North): My question is to the Minister of Transportation. Now that winter has arrived, I, like a number of my colleagues from northern and rural Ontario, am receiving calls about winter highway maintenance. In the Ottawa Valley over the last number of days, I've had several calls from heads of councils, from motorists, from commercial drivers who are extremely upset and concerned about what they believe to be the deterioration in the winter maintenance of Highway 17, particularly through the Pembroke, Renfrew and Arnprior area.

Minister, what do you have to say to my constituents and other motorists who believe, on the basis of a lot of good evidence, that Ontario's winter road maintenance is not as good as it used to be and not as good as it must be to protect the security and safety of the travelling public?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Transportation): I thank the honourable member for the question. I would like to assure him that highway winter maintenance is one of the top priorities of my ministry. We understand that safety, getting from point A to point B in a safe manner, is one of the critical issues for people who are on the provincial highways. We have committed an extensive array of resources to sanding and salting. In fact, we're investing in new technologies to do the job better for less.

I would assure the honourable member that Pembroke is not being unduly badly done by. We are expending the resources that are necessary to get the job done. We are looking at overhead. We want to make sure the resources go to the actual roads involved. We are doing the job that has to be done, given the climatic conditions in Ontario.

Mr Conway: This is a deadly serious matter. A 19-month-old constituent of mine was killed near Arnprior last week and there are a lot of knowledgeable and thoughtful people who believe that the Highway 17 maintenance was not as good as it ought to have been.

This past July — July 24, 1997, to be specific — Mr Justice Joseph O'Brien, in the Ontario Supreme Court (General Division), awarded \$4.5 million worth of damages to Penny Roberts, a 16-year-old Ontarian who was tragically and seriously hurt on the 401 just east of Toronto five years ago. Mr Justice O'Brien found the Ministry of Transportation for Ontario 50% liable for those conditions: bad, substandard winter maintenance conditions.

I say to the minister, what particular assurances is he prepared to give my constituents and the travelling public of Ontario that on the King's highways, 17 and 62 and 28 and 41, the ones we're keeping after downloading, there is going to be an adequate, proper and safe level of winter maintenance?

Hon Mr Clement: Again, I thank the honourable member for the question and assure him that the government is committed to spending \$130 million to ensure that winter maintenance is up to the standard we are expecting in this province. We will ensure that that money is spent in the best way possible for the taxpayers of Ontario. If winter conditions are such that they are worse this year, our government always assures that we spend the money that has to be spent to ensure that our roads are the safest possible under the circumstances, given the conditions in Ontario. I want to assure the honourable member that that will continue under this government this year, next year and in future years as well.

WOMEN'S SHELTERS

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): I have a question for the Minister of Community and Social Services. In 23 days, your government will assume 100% funding responsibility for the emergency women's shelters across the province, yet from one end of the province to the other the women's shelters don't know what their budgets are going to be. In fact, this is what they say: "We, the people who run women's emergency shelters, do not know if we will have money for counselling programs. We don't know if we will get money to cover the full per diem. We don't know if the government will cover victims' personal needs allowances."

Minister, can you tell us why, with only 23 days left, you haven't told these people who do this very important work what their budgets will be, and can you guarantee them that you won't be cutting their budgets as well?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Community and Social Services): I thought I heard the honourable member say something about the municipalities assuming responsibility. I'm not sure if that was accurate or not, if that's what he said, but the municipalities are not assuming responsibility; the province is assuming 100% responsibility. The province will be assuming that and the province will be funding that 100%.

We've also received recommendations from the shelters that the way the funding has currently gone to them on the per diems creates significant problems for their budget process. That's one of the reasons why we are reforming that. We are looking at a budget that will be much easier administratively for them to deal with and that meets the commitment to fund them at 100%.

1500

Mr Hampton: I asked the minister if your government would be covering victims' personal needs allowances, if you'd be covering the full per diem. I asked you if you would be covering the cost of counselling programs. Everyone knows that in the tradeoff with municipalities

and the downloading effort, you're now going to take 100% responsibility for this. I didn't get an answer to any of those three questions.

What we do know, Minister, is this: Women's shelters have been shown a memo which says that you are not going to cover the cost of pay equity. After you were ordered by the Supreme Court of Ontario to live up to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and to follow through on pay equity, you're now out there telling women's shelters that you're not going to cover the cost of pay equity.

Minister, is it your idea that women who work in emergency shelters should be paid less? Is that your idea, that women who work in emergency shelters should be paid less, should accept lower pay? When are you going to tell them their funding, and when are you going to guarantee there will be no funding cuts?

Hon Mrs Ecker: I appreciate the honourable member's attempt to play politics with this, but I'm very surprised that there would be any memo out there saying we are not paying for pay equity when the government has made no final decisions on that. So I would think that's inaccurate, whatever memo he's talking about. There are a number of factors that have been raised around that court decision, and certainly the government is considering very carefully any potential changes in response, if necessary.

Second, I would repeat that 100% responsibility for funding is 100% responsibility for that funding, and we do not back away from that commitment.

MUNICIPAL EMPLOYEES' PENSIONS

Mr Gary L. Leadston (Kitchener-Wilmot): My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. I recently noted that the government has accepted the changes proposed by the Ontario Municipal Employees Retirement Board, commonly referred to as OMERS. I know that the OMERS plan manages about \$30 billion in pension funds on behalf of approximately 250,000 members, so any changes that are made are going to affect a great deal of people. Could the minister please tell the House what implications these changes to the OMERS pension plan will have on Ontario municipalities and also on Ontario taxpayers?

Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I would like to thank the member for Kitchener-Wilmot for the question. It's true that the government has recently accepted the changes from the OMERS board, which are going to be very positive for municipalities in Ontario. These changes will amount to \$1.5 billion in savings for the taxpayers and plan members over the next five years. As a matter of fact, David Griffin, the OMERS board chair, recently stated that when local government wins, taxpayers also win and it's a win-win for all levels.

It's estimated that the changes will result in savings of \$600 million for the GTA alone, another \$120 million for Ottawa-Carleton and \$125 million in the London-Windsor-Sarnia area. Local governments will be able to incorporate these great savings in their 1998 budgets,

which is good news for both the municipalities and the taxpayers in this province.

Mr Leadston: The good news is not only for the municipalities in my riding but for all the taxpayers in Ontario. However, I am sure that my constituents would like to know more about the specific changes to the OMERS pension plan. Could the minister please provide the House with some specific details of the OMERS plan that the government has accepted?

Hon Mr Leach: The main change to the plan is a 2% contribution by both the employer and the employees, which means it's a great benefit to the municipalities in doing their 1998 budget, but it's also a 2% savings for the employees. It's like a 2% wage increase.

The OMERS board was able to propose this reduction due to high investment returns, a large surplus and low inflation rates over the past few years. Other changes include enhancing early retirement provisions for OMERS board members who retire over the next five years. These provisions will also help municipalities in their restructuring plans across Ontario. This is just another example of how this government is working with our stakeholders to make sure that the municipalities and taxpayers across this province get the best return for their investment.

YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT

Mr David Caplan (Orlino): My question is for the Minister of Education. I've been hearing a lot of rhetoric from your government about what it's doing to address the tragedy of youth unemployment in this province. Statistics Canada figures will confirm that 17% of our youth are unemployed versus 15.5% only one year ago.

In April your ministry changed the Futures program, a program focused on youth job placement, to the career and employment preparation program. I'm interested in knowing what are the successes of this new program. I know that on October 10 of this year the Ministry of Education reduced the target for this program to 60% of the expected placements, from 94,000 to 50,000.

Can you tell us what the overall target numbers are for the on-the-job-placement portion of the program, and since the ministry does monthly reviews with the employment agencies, how many young people have been placed to date?

Hon David Johnson (Minister of Education and Training): I'm pleased to say that the province of Ontario over the course of this year is looking at an investment of some \$180 million in total in the youth employment situation, and that will serve about 141,000 young people. As the minister in a previous question has indicated, there are some 43,000 new youth jobs just over this last seven months alone, and Ontario certainly leads Canada in that regard.

In terms of the career and employment preparation program, there are some \$110 million allocated to this particular program. I think this is the information the member was seeking. The program will serve about 94,000 people and the vast majority of them, about 85,000, will be youth.

In the transition period for this year — this year is a transition period, 1997-98 — some 50,000 young people will be served through that program.

Mr Caplan: The minister's answer was quite inadequate. Minister, I think you should be clear on what your commitment is to providing adequate job programs for our young people.

Your deputy minister's performance contract states, "The implementation of the new career and employment preparation program is key," and her expected results are "to reduce costs, to improve participant placement and to increase employer satisfaction."

So far you have reduced moneys to the program. You've cut almost \$42 million from this part of the budget, almost 17.5%. In fact, your participation numbers have not gone up; your own ministry has reduced them to 60% of your target.

When you gave your opening remarks to the estimates committee, and I was there, employment preparation and placement were never mentioned as priorities for your ministry. Minister, this speaks volumes about your government's commitment to youth unemployment in this province. Tell us, what are you planning to do to address the crisis in youth unemployment?

Hon David Johnson: I think I indicated one of the activities in terms of the career and employment preparation program, but the main thing that this government is going to do, as it promised to do during the election, is remove the impediments to the creation of jobs: lowering taxes, getting rid of red tape, overhauling the WCB system.

Between 1985 and 1990, the government represented by the member opposite, the Liberal government, put taxes up some 32 times, I believe it was, in the province of Ontario. If there's anything that kills jobs for young people, for people of all ages, it's that kind of tax increase. That's the problem.

In terms of our investment here in Ontario, I'm pleased to say that this government, the government I represent, is investing some \$180 million in the youth employment situation. The federal government, by comparison, is investing less than half of that amount. Your Liberal federal colleagues in Ottawa —

The Deputy Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Answer, please.

Hon David Johnson: — are investing less than \$80 million.

I plead with you. Talk to your federal colleagues in Ottawa. Get them to put in the same support that we are —

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

1510

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Mr Wayne Lessard (Windsor-Riverside): My question is to the Minister of Education and Training as well. With all the attention being paid to the damage to education caused by Bill 160, it's been easy to overlook what's been happening to colleges and universities in Ontario. In

a recent speech the Premier suggested that graduates in humanities have little chance to make a contribution to society and that liberal arts education wasn't a practical area of study for the future.

Funding to universities is continuing to decline and, as a result, universities are having to make damaging decisions. We've heard that on Friday, Carleton University decided to close undergraduate programs in classics, German, Italian, Spanish, and comparative literature studies, and master's programs in German and in Spanish. This is likely to lead to the first dismissals of tenured faculty as a result of this government's cuts to post-secondary education. Minister, is this what the Premier wanted? Is this what he had in mind?

Hon David Johnson (Minister of Education and Training): I think what the Premier had in mind was simply a system that is accountable, efficient and relevant to the needs of our students today. The universities and colleges are independent. I might say that in terms of our universities, for example, and the kind of test — I guess "test" isn't the right word but the kind of relationships — Maclean's does a scoring system on the universities across Canada, and I'm really delighted that the universities in Ontario score extremely high. They scored extremely high this year and have over the years.

We are privileged to have leaders at the university level, at the college level, who are providing courses, but can the courses be changed to be more relevant, to be more accountable, to be more efficient? I believe we all here today would say yes, they could be, to serve the students, to get jobs and to lead lives in the international world we live in today.

Mr Lessard: From your answer, it appears to me you may agree with the decision by Carleton to cut some of these programs. We believe your approach to post-secondary education is both short-sighted and anti-intellectual. If your budget cuts force universities to slash these kinds of programs, it will have long-term impacts on Ontario's competitiveness and the quality of the society within which we live. We believe those are going to be negative impacts. Is that what you want, Minister?

Hon David Johnson: We simply want the moneys spent at the university level, at the colleges, to be spent in a most effective and efficient manner, and that they involve courses that are relevant to the new century we're embarking upon in the very near future. We must bear in mind that we need to train our young people, equip our young people with the kind of education that will serve them in their life and in the workforce. At the same time we must realize it is the taxpayers — and most of the taxpayers do not attend university — who pay for it, so there must be an accountable and efficient system so that indeed all society benefits from the kind of training they get in universities and colleges, and that's all we're asking for.

TELEMARKETING PRACTICES

Mr Peter L. Preston (Brant-Haldimand): My question is directed to the minister —

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): I'm not sure what's happening here. I missed it, but if you could continue with your question.

Mr Preston: I'd like to get started. My question is directed to the minister responsible for seniors. Over the past few days there have been several newspaper articles in my riding of Brant-Haldimand, and indeed across the province, mentioning the very serious danger seniors face every day from telephone fraud. Telephone fraud is expected to cost Ontario seniors \$3.5 million this year. Can the minister tell the House what the government is doing to protect seniors from these con artists?

Hon Cameron Jackson (Minister without Portfolio [Seniors Issues]): I want to thank my colleague for the question, and I want to inform members of the House that last week my colleague the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations, his parliamentary assistant and I participated in a special program to talk to seniors in this province and warn them about fraud that is continuing on the rise in this province and in this country. It was conducted at Baycrest Centre for Geriatric Care. It involved various members of the community who came in and assisted in this reverse boiler room set up to call seniors and warn them.

The Hang Up On Fraud program that was initiated in this province is in response to a very serious crime that's going on in this country. OPP Detective Staff Sergeant Barry Elliott noted that over the last three years seniors represent about 70% of all of the fraud, which is estimated at \$200 million. The worst case was a senior here in Ontario, which was almost \$2 million taken from one senior citizen.

I'm pleased to report that in initiating this program we talked to over 2,000 seniors; 160 volunteers performed that. I was pleased the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations hosted that event.

Mr Preston: It's encouraging to hear that this program went on, and that's great for Baycrest. But still, fraud is an ongoing problem. Telemarketing fraud is a problem for our seniors particularly. Can you tell me and my constituents in Brant-Haldimand what the government is going to do to help the seniors?

Hon Mr Jackson: First of all, I might point out that after three successive governments, it was this government that brought in the first Victims' Bill of Rights so that we can move towards lessening the victimization of citizens, including seniors. Our Solicitor General has made fraud awareness a major focus of Crime Prevention Week with a combination of educational videos, training and in-service for police officers and additional supports for seniors' groups across the province.

As well, my colleague the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations has provided leadership at the national forum of ministers to lobby for stiffer penalties

with federal legislation, which is involved here. He has begun providing interprovincial agreements so that we can stop these fraud artists who set up shop in Quebec and phone in Ontario and set up in other parts of the country and victimize our seniors.

Anyone with questions about telemarketing fraud can call Phonebusters toll free. That number is 1-888-495-8501. I'm sure all the members will be interested.

MALDEN PARK
CONTINUING CARE CENTRE

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich): My question is for the Minister of Health. Minister, \$44 million was spent on a chronic care centre, and we called that centre Malden Park. We keep our most sickly patients there. Why will you not now fund it as a chronic care hospital?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health): I would certainly take the question under advisement, and I will certainly respond to you as to the status as to what is going on.

Mrs Pupatello: I'm going to take that as a sign that you are not aware of what your own commission that you sent to Windsor is recommending. Instead of continuing to fund a building that you spent \$44 million on as a chronic care facility, you're prepared to spend millions to renovate some other beds to become chronic care. What you're really doing to our Malden Park Centre is reducing the operating cost per bed from \$208 for a chronic care bed to \$58 as a nursing home. May I remind you and all other members in this House that this is a very sneaky way of getting around properly funding chronic care beds which, as this minister knows, we desperately need in Ontario.

I look forward to a very specific answer to explain why on earth you would change that kind of funding when you know, as the last government did, that it always should have been designated a chronic care facility and it was built as such.

Hon Mrs Witmer: The facility was built, as you know, as a long-term-care facility, and it is being funded accordingly at the present time, but I will certainly get the information for you.

1520

HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): My question is also for the Minister of Health. You've been going around the province since your appointment talking about the need to slow down and look at what the effect of all the restructuring has been. That's given rise to hope in some communities that you may not follow through with some of the recommendations of the hospital restructuring commission.

In particular, I've had approaches, as I'm sure the member for Elgin has, from members of our communities in St Thomas and London around the proposed devolution of the London Psychiatric Hospital and the St Thomas

Psychiatric Hospital to the St Joseph's Hospital corporation. I understand that there is some delay happening in terms of that devolution and I'm asking you today, will the timetable suggested by the restructuring commission go ahead with that devolution occurring as of December 31, 1997?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health): We are continuing to look at all of those time lines in order to ensure that the steps that need to be taken can be taken within those time lines, and obviously if there is a need for some adjustment, then the appropriate steps will be taken accordingly.

Mrs Boyd: I think the minister ought to understand that this is a very important question for the people who work in those facilities, for the people who supply those facilities and indeed for the hospitals that may be the recipients of those services. Again, we're talking about a time frame that is very short. It is unbelievable to all of us that whether it's education or health care or any of the other areas, none of the ministers of the government can give us any information about what's going to be happening only 23 days from now.

Minister, would you make it clear? Are you planning, first of all, for the government of Ontario to devolve those services to St Joseph's, and are you intending to go ahead with the recommendation that those two facilities close and the services be shifted to other communities?

Hon Mrs Witmer: As you know, the Ministry of Health is working very closely with the district health councils and they, in turn, are working very closely with the providers and all those involved in the devolution. We are endeavouring to meet those time lines, and obviously if there is a reason to make some changes, we are prepared to do so. We are working actively each day with all those that are impacted to ensure that the appropriate services are in place when the change takes place. I can understand your concern and certainly the concern of those individuals who are going to be impacted by this decision, but let me assure you that we are very closely monitoring that situation.

NATIONAL UNITY

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): My question is to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs. My constituents are keenly interested in the public consultation process on national unity. I've already held one public meeting, which was well attended, this past Saturday and plan to hold another public meeting on December 13, this coming Saturday.

Many who attended the meeting had not received one of the brochures that had been sent out in the mail. I know that home delivery of the questionnaires on the issue was delayed by the recent postal strike. I'm wondering about the status of these brochures and when the public might expect to receive them.

Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for women's issues): The member for Northumberland should be

congratulated on the work he's doing. It gives me an opportunity to advise everyone in the House, including my friend from Algoma, that we're taking every opportunity we can to get the message out with regard to Ontario Speaks, a questionnaire where families are given the opportunity to let us know how they feel about the unity of our country. We really want their opinions. They can telephone 1-800-695-4045 or fax 1-888-258-1940, and hopefully by the end of this week the other two million questionnaires will be distributed throughout Ontario, which will make it almost four million households that will have this opportunity. So it's Web site www.ontario-speaks.com.

Mr Galt: Minister, there are many ways of getting information back to the government. Are there any other ways, and could you tell the House and my constituents how successfully these consultations are going across the province?

Hon Mrs Cunningham: This is a different kind of response, only to remind the members that we in Ontario — the members of the committee from all three parties — have made the decision on this consultation process, because it is so important to the future of the country, that we will continue after the new year with our public meetings throughout our communities.

For all of you who have not taken that opportunity, I hope you will call the Ministry of Intergovernmental Affairs, speak to the member for Downsview, the member for Algoma and myself. Most of us are keenly interested in hearing from the public with regard to their feelings about the future of our country. This is an opportunity that hasn't been made available to them in the past.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): This is probably out of order, but before we move on to petitions, I want to thank you all for your indulgence today and being patient with me. It's the first time as your new Deputy Speaker that I've done question period.

Applause.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. I want particularly to thank those who noticed that I am indeed female — I want to reassure you all of that — and you may call me Madam Speaker. Thank you for your indulgence today.

PETITIONS

CHIROPRACTIC HEALTH CARE

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a petition that reads as follows:

"To the Ontario Legislature, Premier Mike Harris, Health Minister Elizabeth Witmer and members of the Ontario Legislature:

"Whereas the Ministry of Health has recently strengthened its reputation as the Ministry of Medicine through its \$1.7-billion three-year agreement with the Ontario Medical Association; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government is restricting access to alternative cost-saving treatments for patients of the province; and

"Whereas two recent reports commissioned by the Ministry of Health called for increased OHIP funding to improve patient access to chiropractic services on the grounds of safety, effectiveness and cost-effectiveness; and

"Whereas over one million Ontario adults now use chiropractic services annually, increasingly those with higher incomes because of the cost barrier caused by government underfunding; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government has shown blatant disregard for the needs of the citizens of Ontario in restricting funding for chiropractic services;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to recognize the contribution made by chiropractors to the good health of the people of Ontario, to recognize the taxpayer dollars saved by the use of low-cost preventive care such as that provided by chiropractors and to recognize that to restrict funding for chiropractic health care only serves to limit access to a needed health care service."

I affix my signature to this petition.

EDUCATION REFORM

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I have a petition signed by 120 teachers in independent schools in Ontario in support of their colleagues in the public education system. The teachers in the independent schools of Ontario endorse the public school teachers' concern for maintaining the quality of public schooling in Ontario and as taxpayers they are grateful for the teachers' sacrifice and their service to young people in the province.

I agree with the petition and I am affixing my name thereto.

COURT DECISION

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): I have a petition that reads:

"We, the undersigned residents of Canada, draw the attention of the House to the following:

"That the decision to allow women to appear topless in public is offensive; and

"That children should not be exposed to public displays of nudity which contradicts values taught in the Canadian school system; and

"That there are laws and regulations in Canada to protect children against nudity in the media but currently there are no laws protecting children from nudity in public places; and

"That allowing women to appear topless in public encourages poor behaviour which may lead to increased incidence of violence against women;

"Therefore, the undersigned petitioners humbly pray and call upon Parliament to amend the indecent act and public nudity provisions of the Criminal Code to clearly

state that it is an indecent act for a woman to expose her breasts in a public place, with the exception of women who are breast-feeding."

To this I affix my signature.

1530

CERTIFIED GENERAL ACCOUNTANTS

Mr Gerard Kennedy (York South): To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, a petition:

"Whereas it is in the best interests of the public to have open market competition among professional accountants; and

"Whereas, under the Public Accountancy Act, only chartered accountants have full access to public accounting licences in the province of Ontario; and

"Whereas the province of Ontario restricts certified general accountants more than all other provinces, with the exception of Prince Edward Island; and

"Whereas certified general accountants, whose training is identical to that of certified general accountants in the province of Ontario, have a statutory right to practise public accounting in the provinces of Alberta, British Columbia, New Brunswick and Newfoundland, are free to practise in the provinces of Saskatchewan and Manitoba, can be licensed to practise in Nova Scotia and have considerable public accountancy rights in the province of Quebec; and

"Whereas this has created a monopoly in the province of Ontario since 1962 that is not only unfair to the public but also results in additional expenses, particularly to small business owners; and

"Whereas the monopoly results in NAFTA inequalities for certified general accountants in the province of Ontario; and

"Whereas according full professional rights to certified general accountants would lower costs to business by creating competition in accounting and auditing services, which is consistent with the current government's initiative to introduce measures designed to reduce government interference in the private and business lives of Ontario residents; and

"Whereas certified general accountants in the province of Ontario are qualified professionals whose governing body delivers a rigorous and demanding program of professional studies, examines for professional competency, requires practical experience to qualify individuals as certified general accountants, has an established code of ethics and rules of professional conduct and an accompanying disciplinary process to ensure that the standards of the profession are maintained and that the interests of the public are protected; and

"Whereas the Professional Organizations Committee rejected the notion of a monopoly over licensed practices for chartered accountants and specifically supported and recommended the extension of public accounting licences to certified general accountants with experience in the field of public accounting;

"We, the undersigned residents of the province of Ontario, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to grant to the Certified General Accountants Association of Ontario their request for overdue amendments to the Public Accountancy Act to allow certified general accountants full access to public practice licences and to eliminate the present monopoly."

This is signed by residents of Ontario from Newmarket, Toronto, London, Waterdown, as well as residents of my constituency on Scarlett Road, Humberside and other locations. I affix my signature to this petition.

ABORTION

Mr Wayne Lessard (Windsor-Riverside): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario health system is overburdened and unnecessary spending must be cut; and

"Whereas pregnancy is not a disease, injury or illness and abortions are not therapeutic procedures; and

"Whereas the vast majority of abortions are done for reasons of convenience or finance; and

"Whereas the province has exclusive authority to determine what service will be insured; and

"Whereas the Canada Health Act does not require funding for elective procedures; and

"Whereas there is mounting evidence that abortion is in fact hazardous to women's health; and

"Whereas Ontario taxpayers funded over 45,000 abortions in 1993 at an estimated cost of \$25 million;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to cease from providing any taxpayers' dollars for the performance of abortions."

PAY EQUITY

Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): I have a petition signed by a great number of home care workers with the Canadian Red Cross in my riding. They're requesting that the government do something about the pay equity problem that has arisen for their workers. The main focus of their petition is, "We are prepared to forgo this last pay equity payment if it means saving our jobs. All homemakers, regardless of agency, should be paid similar wages, as they do work of a similar nature."

I would like to file this petition with the House.

MALDEN PARK CONTINUING CARE CENTRE

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly. It says:

"Whereas it took 20 years and \$10 million in local donations to create a 225-bed chronic facility known as Malden Park; and

"Whereas this community believed that its donations were going towards the creation of a new chronic care hospital; and

"Whereas the Health Services Restructuring Commission recommends putting chronic care beds in Windsor Western Hospital, at a cost of \$14 million to \$25 million; and

"Whereas the funding levels for Malden Park have been deteriorating over the past two years;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to restore funding levels to Malden Park to the average per-day rate for chronic care and designate Malden Park as a complex continuing care facility, which is what this community raised \$10 million for, and to save the \$14-million cost required to refurbish Windsor Western as a chronic care facility."

I agree with this petition and have signed my name to it as well.

CERTIFIED GENERAL ACCOUNTANTS

Mrs Lillian Ross (Hamilton West): I have a petition similar to the one the member for York South presented, which reads in part:

"Whereas it is in the best interests of the public to have open market competition among professional accountants; and

"Whereas under the Public Accountancy Act only chartered accountants have full access to public accounting licences in the province of Ontario; and

"Whereas the province of Ontario restricts certified general accountants more than all other provinces, with the exception of Prince Edward Island; and....

"Whereas this has created a monopoly in the province of Ontario since 1962 that is not only unfair to the public but also results in additional expenses, particularly to small business owners....

"We, the undersigned residents of the province of Ontario, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to grant to the Certified General Accountants Association of Ontario their request for overdue amendments to the Public Accountancy Act to allow certified general accountants full access to public practice licences and to eliminate the present monopoly."

EDUCATION FINANCING

Mr Frank Miclash (Kenora): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas education is our future; and

"Whereas students, parents and teachers will not allow their futures to be sacrificed for tax cuts; and

"Whereas students, parents and teachers will not allow the government to bankrupt Ontario's education system; and

"Whereas you cannot improve achievement by lowering standards; and

"Whereas students, parents and teachers want reinvestment in education rather than a reduction in funding; and

"Whereas students, parents and teachers won't back down;

"Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, support our MPP Frank Miclash in his efforts to withdraw Bill 160 immediately."

I've attached my name to that petition as well.

ANIMAL WELFARE

Mr Tim Hudak (Niagara South): I have a petition signed by over 1,000 people from Fort Erie, Port Colborne, Niagara and the Toronto area. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas ownership of a domestic animal (pet) is a responsibility not a right;

"Whereas owners have a responsibility to treat their domestic animal (pet) with care and utmost concern for their wellbeing;

"We, the undersigned, support the amendments to the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act."

In support, I add my signature.

MALDEN PARK CONTINUING CARE CENTRE

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich): This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas it took 20 years and \$10 million in local donations to create a 225-bed chronic facility known as Malden Park; and

"Whereas this community believed that its donations were going towards the creation of a new chronic care hospital; and

"Whereas the Health Services Restructuring Commission recommends putting chronic care beds in Windsor Western Hospital at a cost of \$14 million to \$25 million; and

"Whereas the funding levels for Malden Park have been deteriorating over the past two years;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to restore funding levels to Malden Park to the average per-day rate for chronic care and designate Malden Park as a complex continuing care facility, which is what this community raised \$10 million for, and to save the \$14-million cost required to refurbish Windsor Western as a chronic care facility."

This petition is signed by many, many people in the riding of Windsor-Sandwich and the county of Essex.

COURT DECISION

Mr Bob Wood (London South): I have a petition signed by 112 people.

"Whereas the courts have ruled that women have the lawful right to go topless in public; and

"Whereas the Liberal government of Canada has the power to change the Criminal Code to reinstate such public nudity as an offence;

"We, the undersigned, respectfully petition the government of Ontario to pass a bill empowering municipalities

to enact bylaws governing dress code and to continue to urge the government of Canada to pass legislation to reinstate such partial nudity as an offence."

CHOICE IN HEALTH CARE

Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming): This petition reads:

"Please support Tammy. By signing this petition, you will let Janet Ecker, Minister of Community and Social Services, know that she has no right in making decisions about an individual's health. Treatment decisions should be left up to medical professionals, patients and their families."

I will affix my signature to this.

PAY EQUITY

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): I have a petition signed by over 3,000 residents of Northumberland. It's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the province's pay equity law which goes into effect January 1, 1998, will drive the Red Cross homemakers out of business; and

"Whereas this pay equity legislation only affects the Red Cross homemakers; and

"Whereas if the legislation is not amended, the Canadian Red Cross homemakers will no longer be able to provide in-home care for the frail, elderly, handicapped and people coming home early from hospitals;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend the legislation to maintain the Red Cross homemakers' ability to continue this vital public service."

1540

CHIROPRACTIC HEALTH CARE

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): I have a petition to the Ontario Legislature.

"Whereas the Ministry of Health has recently strengthened its reputation as the Ministry of Medicine through its \$1.7-billion three-year agreement with the OMA; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government is restricting access to alternative cost-saving treatments for patients of the province; and

"Whereas two recent reports commissioned by the Ministry of Health called for increased OHIP funding to improve patient access to chiropractic services on the grounds of safety, effectiveness and cost-effectiveness; and

"Whereas over one million Ontario adults now use chiropractic services annually, increasingly those with higher incomes, because of the cost barrier caused by government underfunding; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government has shown blatant disregard for the needs of the citizens of Ontario in restricting funding for chiropractic services;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to recognize the contribution made by chiropractors to the good health of the people of Ontario, to recognize the taxpayer dollars saved by the use of lower-cost preventive care such as that provided by chiropractors and to recognize that to restrict funding for chiropractic health care only serves to limit access to a needed health care service."

This petition is signed by several thousand people.

BEAR HUNTING

Mr Gary L. Leadston (Kitchener-Wilmot): This petition is signed by citizens all over Ontario with respect to protecting the hunting heritage and allowing the continuation of hunting for black bear.

ROYAL ASSENT

SANCTION ROYALE

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): I beg to inform the House that in the name of Her Majesty the Queen, Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been pleased to assent to certain bills in her office.

Clerk at the Table (Mr Todd Decker): The following are the titles of the bills to which Her Honour did assent:

Bill 98, An Act to promote job creation and increased municipal accountability while providing for the recovery of development costs related to new growth / *Projet de loi 98, Loi visant à promouvoir la création d'emplois et à accroître la responsabilité des municipalités tout en prévoyant le recouvrement des coûts d'aménagement liés à la croissance*

Bill 140, An Act to establish the Financial Services Commission of Ontario and to make complementary amendments to other statutes / *Projet de loi 140, Loi créant la Commission des services financiers de l'Ontario et apportant des modifications complémentaires à d'autres lois*

Bill 149, An Act to continue the reforms begun by the Fair Municipal Finance Act, 1997 and to make other amendments respecting the financing of local governments / *Projet de loi 149, Loi continuant les réformes amorcées par la Loi de 1997 sur le financement équitable des municipalités et apportant d'autres modifications relativement au financement des administrations locales*

Bill 152, An Act to improve Services, increase Efficiency and benefit Taxpayers by eliminating Duplication and reallocating Responsibilities between Provincial and Municipal Governments in various areas and to implement other aspects of the Government's "Who Does What" Agenda / *Projet de loi 152, Loi visant à améliorer les services, à accroître l'efficacité et à procurer des avantages aux contribuables en éliminant le double emploi et en redistribuant les responsabilités entre le gouvernement provincial et les municipalités dans divers secteurs et*

visant à mettre en oeuvre d'autres aspects du programme «Qui fait quoi» du gouvernement

Bill 160, An Act to reform the education system, protect classroom funding, and enhance accountability, and make other improvements consistent with the Government's education quality agenda, including improved student achievement and regulated class size / *Projet de loi 160, Loi visant à réformer le système scolaire, à protéger le financement des classes, à accroître l'obligation de rendre compte et à apporter d'autres améliorations compatibles avec la politique du gouvernement en matière de qualité de l'éducation, y compris l'amélioration du rendement des élèves et la réglementation de l'effectif des classes*

Bill 161, An Act to provide fairness for parents and employees by providing remedies relating to the province-wide withdrawal of services by teachers between October 27 and November 7, 1997 and to make a complementary amendment to the Education Act / *Projet de loi 161, Loi favorisant le traitement équitable des parents et des employés en prévoyant des recours à la suite du retrait de services par les enseignants à l'échelle de la province entre le 27 octobre et le 7 novembre 1997 et apportant une modification complémentaire à la Loi sur l'éducation*

Bill 167, An Act to Change the name of the geographic township of Creighton in the Territorial District of Sudbury to Creighton-Davies, and to make a consequential amendment to the Territorial Division Act / *Projet de loi 167, Loi visant à remplacer le nom du canton géographique de Creighton dans le district territorial de Sudbury par celui de Creighton-Davies, et apportant une modification corrélative à la Loi sur la division territoriale.*

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TAX CREDITS TO CREATE JOBS ACT, 1997

LOI DE 1997 ACCORDANT DES CRÉDITS D'IMPÔT POUR CRÉER DES EMPLOIS

Mr Baird, on behalf of Mr Eves, moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 164, An Act to implement job creation measures and other measures contained in the 1997 Budget and to make other amendments to statutes administered by the Ministry of Finance or relating to taxation matters / *Projet de loi 164, Loi visant à mettre en oeuvre des mesures de création d'emplois et d'autres mesures mentionnées dans le budget de 1997 et à apporter d'autres modifications à des lois dont l'application relève du ministère des Finances ou qui traitent de questions fiscales.*

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean): I'm very pleased to have the opportunity to speak to Bill 164. This bill implements and enhances our 1997 budget commitments to

invest in research and development, new technology, cultural industries, youth employment and small business job creation. We listened to the people of Ontario and responded to ideas that would further create economic growth and employment in Ontario.

Bill 164 will support creating more well-paid, leading-edge technology jobs for Ontario's youth. This is absolutely key to the economic future of the province. During the last 10 years, two out of every three jobs in Ontario were created in knowledge and technology-based industries.

Bill 164 will extend the leading-edge technology component of the cooperative education tax credit to include approved apprenticeships and private sector vocational school programs.

Perhaps before I continue, Mr Speaker, I will indicate that I will be splitting my time with the member for Kitchener.

We are going well beyond our budget commitment to encourage companies to expand and create jobs in computer animation and special effects. Bill 164 will increase the Ontario computer animation and special effects tax credit. Ontario trains some of the best experts in the world for this growing and dynamic segment of the film and television production industry. This will help ensure that the talented people trained in Ontario have opportunities to work here.

Bill 164 will also deliver on our commitment to strengthen Ontario's research and development competitiveness and to forge stronger links between the private sector and Ontario's post-secondary research institutions.

The Ontario business research institute tax credit will encourage post-secondary educational and research institutions to become more market-driven to attract business-sponsored research and development. It will also complement the research and development challenge fund by providing companies with an added incentive to contribute towards university research and development.

To help foster job creation and new investment, Bill 164 will also provide an incentive to acquire new technology and to innovate in Ontario.

The Ontario new technology tax incentive will encourage the acquisition and commercialization of new technology by allowing firms to deduct immediately the cost of new technology acquired.

High-tech means jobs for Ontario in Silicon Valley North, in my part of Ontario in Nepean and Kanata in the Ottawa area, in Kitchener-Waterloo, in Carleton Place and indeed in the greater Toronto area. If you look at my community of Nepean alone, you can see a tremendous amount of economic growth that comes right out of this area.

1550

I have here the front page of the Nepean Clarion from June 14, 1997: "5,000 Jobs Coming to City of Nepean: Nortel Announces \$250 Million Expansion." What a tremendous example that is of the good economic news across the province of Ontario, and no provincial money

going to support this, there was no grant. It's an Ontario success story.

I'll read briefly from it:

"A recent announcement by Nortel to expand in the capital region has left many buzzing with excitement — and Nepean stands to be a great benefactor.

"Not only is the \$250-million expansion slated to create over 5,000 new jobs in Nepean by the year 2000, it is expected that 15,000 spinoff jobs will be created in construction, retailing, and service industries across the region."

That's tremendously good news for the people in Ottawa-Carleton and across the province. We look forward to more announcements like that.

We said if we could have an announcement like that once a month we'd be in good shape, and the following month in Ottawa-Carleton we saw another major economic development announcement, from Newbridge Networks. They didn't match the 5,000 new jobs announced for Nepean by Nortel, but they came pretty close: 4,100 new jobs coming to Newbridge in the city of Kanata, adjacent to the city of Nepean.

In Ottawa-Carleton we've only in recent years become good at attracting new companies to our region, but we're very good, in my part of the province, at growing small business. Newbridge is a small business success story. A growing small business in Ottawa-Carleton is good news. Newbridge started out just 10 years ago with annual sales of only \$1 million. Today, its annual sales globally are more than \$1.5 billion. That's tremendously good news for high tech in Ottawa-Carleton, very important.

One of the other important areas for high tech is high income tax rates. When you look at the competitiveness for our friends from other countries, when they go to attract graduates from universities like the University of Waterloo and Bill Gates can set up a Microsoft recruiting office right in the city of Waterloo, they can point to a very low tax rate in Seattle, Washington. That's why our tax competitiveness, in addition to the strong health care system and strong quality of life, is essential to ensuring that these young people can get jobs right here in Ontario. That's extremely important for folks not just in Ottawa-Carleton but right across the province.

The small business sector is an important job creator for our young people. The Ontario graduate transition tax credit will help ensure that taxpayers' investment in educating our young people translates into jobs. Bill 164 enhances our budget commitment to give small business incentives to provide Ontario's young people with jobs. Bill 164 will increase the tax credit rate for small business with both the graduate transition tax credit and the cooperative education tax credit. In my constituency, an incredible number of co-op education students working at Nortel and Newbridge and various small businesses around the region benefit greatly from the co-op education programs of a number of Ontario universities.

Over the next three years, we estimate the graduate transition tax credit will help up to 45,000 unemployed graduates get employment experience and on-the-job

training in a tough job market. That will be good news for young people in Ontario. It's a specific example of one of the many policies and initiatives undertaken by this government in recent times to help concentrate on the problem of youth unemployment, because young people in the province are looking for more than platitudes from politicians. They want more than another government program to simply throw money at a problem; they want some concrete solutions that will yield results. Strategic investments in our young people through the tax system ensure that it will get a maximum bang for the buck and will be of great assistance to young people looking for work in the province. This came out of our budget in May, and we're putting it into legislation through Bill 164, so it's not a new commitment on a Monday afternoon.

The cooperative education tax credit encourages businesses to provide more work experience opportunities for students and encourages institutions to form stronger partnerships with firms in leading-edge fields. Expanding this tax credit to private sector vocational schools and to apprenticeships broadens the benefits of this program for students and employers. By targeting more programs and students in leading-edge technology fields of study, this tax credit will encourage enrolment in high technology fields and increase job opportunities for Ontario's youth.

I can point out another few examples to my colleagues opposite in terms of other tangible examples for young people that have been seen by this government. The Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism, our friend Mr Palladini, made reference earlier today in the House to an important program to help young entrepreneurs in the province. There's an article in the *Globe and Mail* I'll quote from:

"The Ontario government has launched a new training and loans program aimed at young people who want to start their own businesses. Called the young entrepreneurs program, it will provide aspiring owners (aged 18 to 29) with a loan guarantee of up to \$7,500." That's another example of a program to help young people in the province find their way and get that key first employment opportunity.

Another very important area where this government has sought change to help the problem of youth unemployment has to do with the employment insurance premiums of the federal government. This is an issue where parties on all sides of the political spectrum can agree that Ottawa, the federal government, must cut employment insurance taxes. Right now, a windfall in employment insurance tax is going to the bottom line of the federal government. It's a tax that's killing jobs. If you look at the people pushing for changes in employment insurance taxes, and I can quote from the *Globe and Mail* just this morning —

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: This is so fascinating that I'm sure we'd like to have more members present to hear what the member for Nepean has to say. Could you call for a quorum?

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Would you please check if we have a quorum?

Clerk at the Table (Mr Todd Decker): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk at the Table: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Nepean.

Mr Baird: I want to thank my colleague the member for Algoma, who sees so much good in the Ontario economy he wants more people to know about it — more good news in the Ontario economy on job creation efforts.

Before I was interrupted, I was speaking about employment insurance premiums and the terrible tax on jobs that employment insurance premiums are putting on the Ontario economy. There's widespread agreement on this problem. Not only is Ontario's finance minister, Ernie Eves, pushing it; so is the government of British Columbia and its finance minister, Andrew Petter. They're leading the charge, according to today's *Globe and Mail* article on this issue. The huge surplus created in the employment insurance account goes to offset Mr Martin's fiscal problems but kills jobs. That's why in Ontario we on this side of the House believe that job creation is the central priority of government, to create jobs and restore hope and opportunity in Ontario.

Ontario pushed not only for employment insurance premiums to be cut effective January 1; we also, last week, pushed the federal government and our friend Mr Martin and his colleagues in Ottawa to cut and eliminate premiums entirely for young workers. What a great signal that would send to the economy, not just in Ontario but throughout Canada, if we could eliminate employment insurance taxes on workers under the age of 25, to make it as easy as possible, particularly for small business in Ontario, to hire more young people. We look forward to our colleagues at the federal level to respond to that important tax.

Interjection.

1600

Mr Baird: Don't worry, member for Fort York, I'm not through.

I can also mention small business as a key job creator in Ontario. If you look at the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, they regularly poll their members to find out what their views are on a whole host of issues, one of the most job-creation-friendly organizations in the province. They asked a question of their members.

Leur question était dans le questionnaire du 17 octobre 1997. Une fois que le déficit budgétaire fédéral est éliminé, cela devrait remettre davantage l'accent sur les réductions d'impôts sur les dépenses pour les programmes. Les résultats des réponses dans la province à cette question, bien sûr c'est en français aussi, sont très intéressants. Le nombre de petites entreprises dans la province qui ont dit oui à cette question était de 91 %, et qui ont dit non de 15 %.

So we can see that there is solidly more support for further reducing taxes to help job creation measures than for the federal government to undertake new spending policies. The Canadian Federation of Independent Busi-

ness represents some of the biggest job creators in Ontario, because while we love to see 5,000 new jobs at Northern Telecom, we know that so many of the jobs are going to be created when one small enterprise takes on an extra employee or two a couple of times a year. That's where we'll see a substantial amount of opportunity for young people in Ontario.

We hope that our friend Mr Martin will keep this in mind in the consultations leading up to his budget. I have a clipping here where obviously the finance minister at the federal level realizes the problem, and I'll quote the Toronto Sun headline: "Martin Admits Taxes Too High. Four years into his term as Minister of Finance, Paul Martin" — the federal Liberal Minister of Finance — "finally recognizes that taxes across the country are too high." I'll read from this article: "'Obviously, I think taxes are too high,' Finance Minister Paul Martin told CTV's Question Period yesterday." This is from February 24. "We would like to bring them down, but we're not going to bring them down to jeopardize the basic values of Canadians."

So tax cuts later or tax cuts never with this individual, you would think. He thinks we should do both, though, according to this article. We're waiting for some tangible evidence, as the federal budget comes into balance, that he is concerned about the plight of small business, one of the key job creation sectors in Ontario, to give them a glitter of hope, a light at the end of the tunnel in terms of high taxes. We anxiously await announcements coming from his department.

Improving access to capital will help small business in communities throughout Ontario grow and create jobs. Bill 164 reflects how we listen to stakeholders on making the community small business investment fund more attractive. The 1997 budget announced the creation of the community small business investment fund to encourage communities to partner with financial institutions, labour-sponsored investment funds and local investors to provide greater access to capital for small, local-growth businesses.

Bill 164 will provide further support for small business by enhancing and simplifying the small business investment tax credit for banks, trust companies, credit unions and caisses populaires, which will allow these financial institutions to reduce their capital tax when they invest or lend to small businesses. I know my colleague from Fort York — all the big banks are headquartered in his constituency — will be very pleased to learn about these new measures.

To simplify and modernize Ontario's capital tax system, this bill will harmonize Ontario's capital tax on banks and other financial institutions with the federal large corporations tax. This will level the playing field between financial institutions. It will also reduce compliance costs for businesses and administration costs for government.

Bill 164 recognizes the important contribution of the domestic film and television industry to our economy. This was an issue that got a lot of favourable push from the

then Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation, the Honourable Marilyn Mushinski, who pushed very hard for these programs. It's already yielding substantially more investment in Ontario and more jobs, particularly here in Toronto.

Interjection.

Mr Baird: In fact, as the member for Scarborough Centre says, right outside this building today, outside the Macdonald and Whitney blocks, they're filming another film and television production as a positive result and example of this measure brought in during the last budget. This change implements the 1997 budget announcement to increase Ontario's domestic film and television tax credit rate and increase the corporate annual limit.

The Minister of Finance has also announced that legislation will be introduced to expand eligible genres and to remove caps on size of production and total credits. These changes will significantly expand the amount of eligible Canadian content production that will qualify for Ontario's tax credits. These measures will help ensure that Ontario continues to be a leading-edge film and television production centre in North America.

The finance minister said that we will be consulting with the federal government on the 48% cap on qualifying expenditures for the domestic film and television credit tax credit in an effort to work in concert as we harmonize Ontario's film tax credit with the federal system.

He also announced that Ontario will also be reviewing the existing caps under the federal computer animation and special effects tax credits.

Bill 164 will provide more support for other cultural industries. The book publishing tax credit will encourage Ontario publishers to publish more and promote new Canadian authors, and that will be good news in Ontario.

The bill responds to advice from the book publishing industry to include educational textbooks and first-time illustrators of children's books.

There is new confidence in the private sector. We want to help Ontarians take advantage of the opportunities opening up around the province.

Bill 164 supports lower-income working families who are not benefiting from the current child care funding. By implementing our budget commitment for a child care tax credit, about 90,000 families and about 125,000 children under the age of seven are expected to benefit from the 1997 tax credit. This tax credit will be a new investment of \$40 million to support lower-income working families and, most important, their children.

This government is committed to ensuring that Ontarians receive high-quality services in a cost-effective way. This legislation delivers on our commitment to reduce costs and to make sense of the division of provincial and municipal responsibilities by returning property assessment to municipalities where it can be done more efficiently. Bill 164 will establish the Ontario Property Assessment Corp. After a quarter-century of the province running this local tax base, local governments will take over the control and management of it now that the province-wide assessment is nearly completed.

The 1997 budget announced measures that are part of the government's plan to make Ontario the best place in the world to live, work and invest.

For many, many years Ontario was the economic engine of Canada. We were a magnet for jobs, investment and opportunity. But for 10 years around the world, Ontario became known as a mismanaged debtor, over-governed, overregulated, overtaxed. In just two years the Ontario economy has rebounded sharply. We're leading the way in jobs in Canada. Once again we're the magnet for jobs, investment and opportunity.

Looking through the papers just today, you can see examples: "Ontario Top Job Creator and Welfare Rolls Dropping" — the Toronto Sun. "Ontario is leading the country in job growth in 1997 and the trend should spill over to the new year, Statistics Canada figures show." Those aren't Ministry of Finance figures; those are figures from the federal government, Statistics Canada — more jobs in Ontario.

Just last month alone, Ontario picked up 13,000 of these jobs. I know my colleagues on all sides of the House will welcome those types of measures.

Canadians are confident about personal finances. That's something we haven't seen in many, many years in Ontario. We look at the Toronto Star, December 5: "Help-Wanted Index Holds Seven-Year High." More good news.

1610

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener): Seven years.

Mr Baird: Seven years, as the member for Kitchener says. "Job listings hit seven-year high. The number of advertised job postings jumped to its highest level in seven years last month, suggesting an improving job picture." We think this is good news. We think it's going to lead to substantially more jobs. We've already seen some solid evidence of solid job growth across the province. But now is not the time to let up. That's why we have a whole host of tax measures in this budget designed to ensure the ball keeps rolling and that more jobs are created in Ontario.

The Ontario economy grew at an annualized rate in the first quarter of this fiscal year, from April to June, by 7.2%. That's substantial growth and good news for the people of Ontario. Clearly, tax cuts are helping to restore consumer confidence, and that's good news. Tax cuts are restoring consumer confidence.

The income for too many families in Ontario was flat-lined. The ability of working men and women to be able to provide for their families was severely compromised. More taxes and static income led to less hope and less opportunity, particularly for young people looking for their first job. Too many young families were struggling to provide an income for their families.

These folks don't protest high taxes in front of Queen's Park, they don't have temper tantrums in front of the television cameras, but these folks are the backbone of Ontario's society. They work hard, they raise their families, they pay the taxes, they run the small businesses, they are active in the community and they play by the rules. These hardworking families across Ontario were hit hard by 65 tax increases over 10 years and they are beginning

to see light at the end of the tunnel. They are beginning to see for the first time in many, many years their real spending power increase. There is confidence coming in the Ontario economy and that's good news, because for far too many, the price of high taxes meant it was just that much more difficult to raise a family and to provide for their children.

We know that the private sector is the primary economic engine of Canada. It is our government's responsibility to motivate entrepreneurs to invest and to create jobs here. This is what we are doing by cutting taxes, eliminating barriers to growth and providing the private sector with the tools it needs to invest, compete and create jobs for the people of this province. In the last eight months Ontario has created 70% of all the new private sector jobs in Canada.

Mr Wettlaufer: Seventy per cent.

Mr Baird: "Seventy per cent," the member for Kitchener says. Clearly, something is working in Ontario that is not working across the provinces. If there were such solid job creation across the whole country, we'd see the same job growth on a per capita basis in the Maritimes, in Winnipeg or in Saskatchewan, but we're seeing a disproportionate amount of the growth in Ontario and in Alberta. Why? Because taxes are low, and low taxes help encourage more job creation.

The concern we have as a community, spanning all political parties, whether it's for young people looking for their first job — it's helped more by solid economic growth than it is by any haphazard government program.

The high incidence of child poverty, despite having declined considerably over the last two years, is still far too high. The single best thing we can do for a child living in poverty is to get their mother or father a job. As a government, it's our priority to create an environment where those jobs will come, and we've seen some very solid growth in that area in recent months.

Ontario's youth are starting to realize the benefits of our strong economic and employment growth. In the past six months, 39,000 jobs have been created for youth in Ontario; more than 90% of Canada's youth employment gains right here in Ontario; 39,000 more jobs for young people. Again, if the federal government's youth job creation strategy is working, why are 90% of those jobs coming to Ontario? I suggest it's because the climate is right in Ontario for economic growth, and this government has played a major role in setting that climate on the right track — in the past six months, 39,000 jobs.

While this is encouraging progress, there are still 144,000 young Ontarians looking for work. This is unacceptable. That is why we are introducing measures like the graduate transition tax credit and improving the cooperative education tax credit. It's extremely important because across the country the other provinces — Ralph Klein, the Premier of Alberta, had a jobs and economic growth summit in Alberta. They invited business, labour and representatives from universities to come together and look at what they could do to help grow the Alberta econ-

omy. Do you know one of the questions they asked at that Alberta growth summit?

Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Centre): What was that?

Mr Baird: The member for Scarborough Centre asks. They had Northern Telecom there, and at one of the public sessions, Ralph Klein and his officials looked over at Northern Telecom and said, "What is it going to take in the province of Alberta for you to make a quarter-of-a-billion-dollar job announcement like you did in Nepean?" That's what they asked. So our climate in Ontario is right and it has seen substantial growth.

For those high-tech and knowledge-based industries, the budget measures will help small business. So many small businesses in Ontario need nurturing. This will help those so that the Newbridge of tomorrow will be born today. The government of Ontario wants to be there to assist in these measures so that we can see more solid growth.

I mentioned the job growth in Nepean, where 5,000 new jobs came in at Northern Telecom. Even more exciting than the 5,000 jobs themselves, even more exciting than the \$250 million of capital investment in our economy, in direct construction jobs and fabrication jobs, is that the federal government estimates that three to four spinoff jobs will come from every single new job at Nortel. That means 15,000 or 20,000 net new jobs for my region, which is incredible, so that everyone can benefit. Whether you're the construction worker building a new home in Longfield or Davidson Heights, whether you're a small business person operating a retail establishment in Bells Corners, whether you're someone who installs carpet directly at Nortel, whatever you do, whatever small business you undertake, you will benefit. This high tide will bring in far more than the 5,000 boats in this job and a tremendous amount of opportunity for young people.

Mr Wildman: If they are already doing it, why do you wish to —

Mr Baird: The member asks, if they're already doing it, why do we want to encourage it? Because we want to help small business. We want to help those growing enterprises succeed. We want to help create the climate and the competitive research and development strategy that will make more companies want to invest in Ontario, allow more companies to expand their operations in Ontario and not in other competing jurisdictions.

Mr Wildman: Spend, spend, spend.

Mr Baird: The member opposite, I know, shares my enthusiasm for the very solid job growth we've seen in the province. It's been very, very solid growth and we're pleased to see it, particularly for young people.

In these average jobs out at a place like Newbridge Networks in Kanata, right adjacent to Nepean in the region of Ottawa-Carleton, the average salary is \$50,000 or \$60,000; a full-time job at a good salary, where someone can realize their dream of owning their own home and raising a family. That's good news for the folks there. We want to encourage more small business successes like Newbridge, through research and development tax credits,

through co-op education programs. It helps the economy, it helps young people and it helps research and development, and that's good news for Ontario.

The measures in Bill 164 are a significant part of our plan to make Ontario's economy stronger by creating a climate where investment and initiative are rewarded. The government, with the advice and commitment of Ontario, is working to make Ontario once again the province of hope and opportunity, to make Ontario again the magnet for jobs, investment and opportunity, the magnet for solid economic growth. This bill will be a major part of that plan.

1620

Mr Wettlaufer: It's a real pleasure to be able to speak to Bill 164, the Tax Credits to Create Jobs Act, 1997. As you're aware, when we campaigned prior to the last election, we campaigned on the basis of jobs. That was our goal, to create jobs.

Mr Wildman: How many jobs?

Mr Wettlaufer: The member for Algoma calls out, "How many jobs?" We campaigned on the basis of creating 725,000 jobs. We knew there was going to be some economic drag as a result of some of the measures that we were going to take. As a result of some of the measures that we have taken, we knew that this economic drag was going to last for a period of one to two years, and it did last two years. We only managed to create an environment in which 25,000 jobs were created in the first two years, but in the first eight months of this year we created an environment in which private industry created 235,000 jobs. Not only that, but we exceed —

Mr Baird: How many did the NDP create?

Mr Wettlaufer: The member for Nepean says, "How many did the NDP create?" We know that the NDP had a net loss of 10,000 jobs in the period of time that they were in power. But more important is that we have exceeded our budget targets each year since we've come into power. The five years under the previous government, they never met one of their targets. Every one they fell short. The deficit grew and unemployment grew, but we have changed that.

We said that we would achieve this environment through a number of measures. One of them, of course, was by the reduction of red tape. A second was streamlined business startup. A third was incentive for banks to invest in small business — small business, the engine of our economy; small business, which provides so many jobs, the vast majority of jobs. Seventy per cent of all new jobs this year in Ontario have come in small business.

We also said we would cut personal and business taxes, that that would assist in the creation of jobs. How are we doing? I think that's a very good question, even if I asked it myself, but I think for an answer we'll go to what Dalton McGuinty, the leader of the Liberal Party, said this summer. First of all, he applauded the Mike Harris Tories. This is the leader of the opposition party, the Liberal Party. He applauded us for our tight-fisted spending controls and said that he would not undo the Tory tax cuts if elected Premier. I'll quote him now:

"I think there is a sense, in some quarters, that this is the first Premier that has made a genuine effort to reduce the costs of government.

"I think a lot of people like that. Somebody is getting a grip on the fiscal realities.

"I will not reverse the tax cuts if I become Premier. You can't afford to do so. It would send out a negative signal about our economy."

That's the end of the quotation. Dalton McGuinty, the Liberal leader of Ontario, said that this summer. That's a blanket endorsement of our economic policies.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): Take your time.

Mr Wettlaufer: Thank you, I will. The member for Fort York says to take my time. I will, but I was trying to speed it up, member for Fort York, because I was hoping to leave you some time to speak. But if you don't want it, then I can just keep going on all afternoon, as you're aware.

What is happening in Ontario? The member for Nepean said Ontario used to be the engine that drove the economy of the country, and then, all of a sudden, it came to a stop during that five-year period of the NDP government. In the last two years, is it picking up? Yes, it is picking up. It is picking up in such a manner that the housing market is up. In my riding, Kitchener, in the Kitchener-Waterloo area, Waterloo region, it's up 25% this year. Auto sales, what's happening to them? They're up. Of course they're up. What about sales of consumer goods? They're up. The economy is booming, and Ontario is driving Canada's economy once again.

I'd like to go to a couple of the clippings that I read from day to day. We all read them. It doesn't matter whether it's in the pages of the Financial Post or the Globe and Mail or the Kitchener-Waterloo Record, my home paper, a good paper. Here's one from the Toronto Star, October 7:

"Ontario Engine Driving Canadian Economy"

"Today Ontario is attracting many foreign direct investments with world and North American product mandates. All of the top 10 Canadian high-technology manufacturers are based in Ontario. We are the most R&D-intensive jurisdiction in Canada."

In my riding, Kitchener-Waterloo, we know that. We know in Kitchener and Waterloo and Cambridge the effect that R&D is having. We are an intense R&D area. We are an intense high-tech area. There are thousands upon thousands of jobs being created in high tech. In my riding of Kitchener and in Waterloo region, we are now one of the lowest unemployment areas in all of Canada: 7.4% and it is still decreasing.

We read an article. We have quoted John McCallum, the vice-president of the Royal Bank, chief economist. John McCallum said that he might have trouble with us reaching our 725,000 job goal, but he did say we will reach 525,000, and he said: "However, 525,000 is a huge number." But before we emphasize too much what he said, I think all we have to do is go to what they said in the TD Bank, and the Bank of Canada governor. They said that they expect there will be another 400,000 net new

jobs created this year. We know 70% of them are coming to Ontario. They're predicting another 300,000 for 1998-99. There's going to be 70% again coming to Ontario. They're talking about another 300,000 in the year 1999-2000.

Where are the jobs coming? They're coming to Ontario. Why? Because we have an environment which is creating these jobs. We have an environment which is encouraging business to invest here, and when they invest here, jobs are created here. So of course we're going to hit our 725,000 target. It's a steady growth, a steady growth which provides steady jobs, and these jobs are going to be in the higher element. They are going to be the higher-grade jobs. We're talking \$50,000-, \$60,000-, \$70,000-, \$80,000-, \$100,000-a-year jobs.

We do have a shortage, however. We have a demand for jobs in the tool and die industry that we can't even meet, and these jobs are going to provide \$40,000- and \$50,000- and \$60,000-a-year incomes — so many jobs that we can't meet them in the province of Ontario.

What does the public say about all this? This past week, there was a poll done by Compas Research. Conrad Winn, the president of Compas Research, has been doing a fair amount of discussing. He has been arguing, in some sense, about what this all means.

1630

Mr Marchese: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: There is no quorum in the House that I can tell. Would you check for that, please?

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Would you check to see if there is a quorum present?

Clerk Assistant (Ms Deborah Deller): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk Assistant: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member for Kitchener.

Mr Wettlaufer: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I appreciate the member for Fort York encouraging more people to come in because we have such good news to say that I think everyone should hear about it.

But we want to know what the public is saying about this. In this poll that Compas Research recently put out — this is very interesting and I would appreciate it if you would listen: "Canadians are fed up and angry about the amount of taxes they pay, with 82% of respondents" in this poll saying that taxes are just too high, just like Paul Martin, the finance minister for the federal government, and "52% of Canadians hold this opinion intensely." They are intensely angry about high taxes.

There was "A 1970s-style, tax-the-rich mentality." Do you know something, Mr Speaker? There are some parties in this House who hold to that old-style mentality.

Mr Marchese: Who are those?

Mr Wettlaufer: "Who are those?" says the member for Fort York. Well, we know who they are. They're the Liberal and the New Democratic parties, primarily the NDP.

Mr Marchese: The New Democratic Party.

Mr Wettlaufer: New Democratic? You call that democratic? High taxes are democratic? That's anti-democratic.

But 60% of those polled agree that one reason Ottawa should not cut taxes is that a lot of high-income people can afford to pay a lot more taxes. I find that very contradictory.

But, "Canadians oppose high taxes for corporations." Why do Canadians oppose high taxes for corporations? Because they realize that corporations are providing jobs and they realize that high taxes inhibit job creation.

"Canadians' hostility to high taxes is driven by fear...." It's not driven by greed. Even Conrad Winn said that in this article. We might ask, if it's fear and anxiety which drives this, what are the causes of fear and anxiety? It's the fear that high taxes will cause a corporation to lay off more people. It's fear about the taxpayers' future. It's fear that the taxpayer won't have a job, won't have this standard of living that we like and that we've become accustomed to having.

People are looking to corporations to create jobs and they realize that high taxes will inhibit those jobs. It's something that the NDP hasn't got through their heads yet. But they will. There's also a realization —

Mr Marchese: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: There is no quorum in this House again. Would you check, please?

The Acting Speaker: Would you check for a quorum, please?

Clerk Assistant: A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk Assistant: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member for Kitchener.

Mr Wettlaufer: There is another reason why the public is a little upset about business taxes. The public has now come to realize that business does pay its fair share of taxes.

I quote here from a column in the Kitchener-Waterloo Record on December 6. With all respect to the individual quoted, from the Conference Board of Canada, the report was by Mahmood Iqbal, and I hope I have pronounced his name right.

"The myth is that corporations pay only income taxes," he said. What's missing from the picture is the fact that, in addition to income tax, corporations pay taxes on practically all aspects, including capital, sales, property and payroll — and the share of all these taxes has been increasing."

The article goes on to say: "Corporate income tax, which was applied at the rate of 50% in 1965, decreased to 36% in 1995." That's corporate income tax now. "But employers' payroll taxes increased to 36% from 8% in the same period.

"Total tax contribution of Canadian corporations — including payroll, sales, property and income taxes — increased by 144% over the last 30 years.

"Payroll taxes recorded the highest growth at 341%, followed by non-residential property tax at 151%."

We recognized, from what happened to the previous government, that if taxes go up, revenue does not necessarily follow. Revenue goes down because it encourages people to cheat. It encourages corporations to cheat. It encourages looking for more loopholes.

Mr Ron Johnson (Brantford): The underground economy is a big one.

Mr Wettlaufer: The underground economy — I say to the member for Brantford, thank you — has grown by leaps and bounds in all sectors of our society. But if we bring taxes down to their proper level, encouraging people in legitimate businesses, legitimate jobs, to pay legitimate taxes, revenues will go up, will they not? Of course they will. We've already seen in the last two years that they will. We've seen that.

Do you know what? What is happening is that we are on target to balance our books by the year 2001, as we said we would. We said we would balance our budget by the year 2000-01 and we are on target. In fact, we're not only on target, we are ahead of budget.

This government is ahead of budget. We have met our targets every year, but the previous government, whose numbers now are in the area of 17 and they sit as the third party, is constantly attacking us.

1640

Mr Ron Johnson: They don't even have targets.

Mr Wettlaufer: They don't even understand business. They never met a target.

We will achieve our goals. We will provide the jobs for the public. We will provide the jobs for the youth and we will not saddle our youth with a deficit that they will not be able to recover from. Bill 164, the Tax Credits to Create Jobs Act, 1997, goes a long way in that direction.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): If you'd listened to the last two speakers, who have been espousing what they feel has been happening in Ontario, you would say, "Yes, that may be so for some people," but for about a third of the people of Ontario things have gotten progressively worse, and we all know where that started. It all started when the welfare rates were cut by 22%, and don't for a moment forget that there are still an awful lot of vulnerable people in this province who are hurting as a result of that decision. All one has to do is walk into the shelters. All one has to do is walk into any kind of mental health care institution or facility or see people who have any kind of problems in life and you realize very quickly that whatever good things are happening in Ontario as far as these two members are concerned, they sure aren't affecting everybody.

It was always my impression that when a government was elected, it was elected to govern on behalf of all the people of Ontario. This government, the longer that I sit here and the longer I go and the longer I meet with people etc, I'm becoming more and more convinced that this government has basically written off the people at the bottom third of the economic scale and ladder. They basically don't care about them. It's a fact, because look at the chaos that this government has created over the last two

years. The only way they seem to be able to govern at all is by taking on this group or that group. It started with the people on welfare. Then we went to the OPSEU workers. Then we went to even the doctors. Of course, the doctors won, as we all know. Then it was the teachers a while back. It just goes on and on. They seem to be convinced that as long as they create chaos and controversy, then they will keep their so-called popularity, which of course is on a downward swing anyway.

It just isn't the way these last two members have stated it to be for the majority of Ontarians.

Mr Marchese: With each and every speech that we get from this government, it reveals nothing except the oleaginous nature of this party. That is all we get with each and every speech. Mind you, I love olive oil. I love it in my salad. I love it in the pasta. But when you listen to these speeches from these members, we have nothing but the oleaginous nature and character that is revealed in these speeches.

I urge you to look at the title, and I will read it very briefly: "An Act to implement job creation measures and other measures contained in the 1997 Budget...." Would you trust a government that in each and every one of the titles that is contained in this bill has absolutely nothing to do with what is contained inside that bill, in each and every one of the bills? For example, if you recall the tenant protection bill, there was nothing in the bill for tenants. I read this title to tell you and again to reveal the odious nature, the duplicitous nature of this government.

What we have is a legislative process in this government that has been nothing short of chaotic. We have 300-page bills drafted in a hurry, hundreds of pages of amendments to fix up mistakes, and then more-than-200-page bills of this sort to fix up mistakes that weren't caught in the hundreds of amendments. We have nothing but chaos in this government because it's in too much of a hurry to destroy basic fundamental things that we hold dear and that we value.

What we have in this bill is a revelation of the chaos and the incompetence of this government. This bill is a bill intended to fix the incompetencies of each and every other bill that has preceded it. That's what this bill is all about, and it is hidden in the duplicitous title, "An Act to implement job creation measures...." Would you believe a government that entitles its bills in this way? I don't.

Mr Bill Grimmett (Muskoka-Georgian Bay): It's a pleasure to comment on the speeches given by the member for Nepean and the member for Kitchener, a couple of people who, from their very lengthy business pasts, I'm sure are able to comment on the nice climate we have in Ontario now for business. It certainly is also a great opportunity to comment on the name of Bill 164: "Tax Credits to Create Jobs Act." Both speakers, for those of us who were listening, mentioned the significance of the tax credits in the bill and how they will lead to job creation.

Just to remind the members who weren't listening, the tax credits to create jobs in the act include under the Corporations Tax Act, the new technology tax incentive, the film and television tax credit, the graduate transitions tax

credit, the cooperative education tax credit, the Ontario book publishing tax credit, the Ontario computer animation and special effects tax credit, the Ontario business-research institute tax credit and the capital tax harmonization and capital tax surcharge, as well as the small business investment tax credit. These are all well-researched areas of the economy. We know these tax credits are going to lead to job creation. That was very clearly pointed out by the member for Nepean, who has an enviable record in his riding of creating numerous high-tech jobs. He deserves some of the credit. They're well-paying jobs.

The member for Kitchener also talked about the job creation in his riding and how in his riding businesses recognize that we've created a very positive climate for investment and job creation. This has been the result of the very cautious fiscal measures that we've taken, and in addition to that, the very innovative suggestions that were brought out in the budget and that are in Bill 164.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I thought I was hearing from a number of people who had business experience and I was wondering where the member for Nepean had had business experience. The member for Scarborough Centre said that he had a paper route, so I did want to allow for that. I had one as well, if it helps at all.

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough-Ellesmere): I bet it wasn't the Toronto Star.

Mr Bradley: I have offended the member for Scarborough-Ellesmere by saying that; I don't know why. I had a paper route. It was actually the Sudbury Star that I had at one time as a youngster.

Bill 164, as people at home can see, is another thick bill which has just come into being today. The critics of the two opposition parties — they'll tell us more about this — have been looking for a briefing on Bill 164. For some reason, I can't figure out what it would be, ministry officials have been unable — or unwilling; I don't know which it is, they'll explain better — to give a briefing on Bill 164. I hope it's not because this has been cobbled together at the last minute. I hope it's not because this is simply a bill which tries to fix up several other mistakes out there, one of these omnibus bills which is also ominous.

Bill 160 needed some amendments and the government didn't want to open Bill 160 up and deal with it where it should, so we didn't get any amendments to that bill.

Then there was Bill 149, another bill that needed some amendments. Instead of the government going to what's called committee of the whole to implement those amendments, to put them forward, to debate them, they came in the back door with another thick bill, which I call the fix-up-all-the-mistakes bill because it in effect does exactly that. All the mistakes of the Harris government have to be fixed up in this particular bill, and it's unfortunate that's what it's taken.

1650

The Acting Speaker: The member's time has expired. The member for Nepean.

Mr Baird: I'd like to thank the members for Kingston and The Islands, Fort York, Muskoka-Georgian Bay and St Catharines for their comments.

I can certainly indicate to my colleagues opposite and to the member for St Catharines that now that the Speaker has rendered a ruling on the challenge on Bill 164, we of course will be very pleased to work with them to set up any briefings that would be required, and that goes without saying.

I want to comment about the economic alternatives presented by my colleagues. We just heard statements from the Liberals and from the NDP. I look at my friend Mr Marchese, M. Marchese. I respect him. We disagree on the issues but I respect his position and it's consistent.

But two of my colleagues from the Liberal Party commented on the tax cuts in this bill and the economic policy of the government. I did a little research: Thursday, February 16, 1995, "McLeod Reinforces Commitment to Cut Taxes." "Ontario Liberal leader Lyn McLeod said tonight a Liberal government in Ontario would cut taxes. 'It's time that government started following a policy for zero tolerance for tax increases. A Liberal government will reduce overall taxes by 5%.'" A \$2-billion tax cut.

Mr Marcel Beaubien (Lambton): Who said that?

Mr Baird: Lyn McLeod, the leader of the Liberal Party.

Mr Wettlaufer: The former leader.

Mr Baird: The former leader. I'm sorry.

What do the other Liberal critics say about the Liberal policies? "How can we go in, guns blazing, when we would be doing the same things?" Do you know who said that? Sandra Papatello said that. "We would be doing the same things." This is from a Hamilton newspaper, the 9th day of the ninth month, 1995. "We would be doing the same things as Mike Harris." That's what Sandra Papatello and the Liberal Party are saying.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate.

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): I'm pleased to continue the debate on Bill 164. I'll start by something that I'm not sure all our —

Mr Ron Johnson: What did Sandra say?

Mr Phillips: There goes the member for Brantford. He's very seldom here, but just so the public — Mr Johnson shows up about every two weeks or three weeks and then he yells loud enough that he gets his name mentioned and then we don't see him again.

Mr Gerretsen: He's like Andy Thompson.

Mr Phillips: He's like Andy Thompson.

Mr Wildman: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I have the greatest respect for my friend from Scarborough-Agincourt and I'm looking forward to his intervention, but I do want to say that it is really against the rules to comment on the continuing absence of the member for Brantford.

The Acting Speaker: That is not a point of order. The Chair recognizes the member for Scarborough-Agincourt.

Mr Phillips: I'll try not to comment again on his continuing absence.

I want to comment on the process we're following here, just so the public understands, and that is, I used to be a businessperson myself. I had three companies. Two of them I started literally from scratch. I had 300 employees, so I know a little bit about businesslike approaches to things. Let me just say that I've seldom seen — I don't like to use extreme language — any government that seems as less prepared as this government.

This Bill 164 is 200 pages long. It was introduced on November 25. The government is going to demand that we pass this into law by next Thursday. By December 18 this will be law. We were unable to get any briefing on it and the public may say, "Well, can't you just read it and understand it?" No, you can't because you have to firstly go through the intent of the law. You have to say, "If we pass this with that language, what will it permit and what will it not permit?"

We finally were able to get a briefing at 12:30 today. It now is 5 o'clock. This will be the last opportunity I will have to debate this bill. The way the rules are around here, and I'm what's called the critic for this area, we had a briefing and the bureaucracy — I'm not blaming them — was put in a very difficult spot. There were three or four major questions on the contents of this bill that we were simply unable to get any answer to. For example, there are significant freedom of information implications in this bill where there will be virtually unfettered rights to personal information, with the exception of health records, but all other records. This bill will fundamentally provide that. That has the potential for significant invasion of privacy.

I heard some of the Conservative backbench members twice recently, correctly I think, point out some of the freedom of information problems if you're not careful. As I recall, one of the major objections to photo-radar was the invasion of privacy, but this bill, although they were unable to give us an answer because I gather whoever could get the answer was not around, I think fundamentally changes that. The bill also provides, I gather, for example, for all of the deposits at our Ontario savings and loan offices —

Mr Bradley: POSO.

Mr Phillips: POSO. My colleague Mr Bradley deals with them on a regular basis. All of their assets can now be transferred with this bill, I think, over to other financial institutions.

My point is this: It is wrong from the public's point of view and from our point of view, and I would think wrong from that of the Conservative backbench members, that we are going to be forced to pass a bill 200 pages long. The short title of the bill is Tax Credits to Create Jobs Act. Part of it's about that, but the majority of the bill's about all sorts of other things.

If the public doesn't want to listen to the opposition, and sometimes they probably watch us and there seems to be constant bickering, let me just say what the Association of Municipal Clerks and Treasurers said. This is a well-regarded organization. These are the senior municipal bureaucrats. This is the organization of the very top people in all our municipalities, the clerks and treasurers.

What do they say about Bill 164? They provided a brief on Bill 164. Among other things, they're concerned about Bill 164 because here's a bill we're being asked to pass that amends major bills we only passed last week: Bill 160, quite a controversial bill on education that we all are familiar with, and the property tax bill, Bill 149. This is what the clerks and treasurers say, and this is strong language for them, but I think they selected this language carefully and with conviction:

"Isn't this wonderful? This government wants to amend legislation that hasn't even been passed yet." This is the key point: "Surely this illustrates better than anything that this government, in its haste, is making legislation by the seat of its pants without proper thought or planning. Yesterday's bill is amended by today's, which will likely be amended by tomorrow's. No wonder the municipal clerks and treasurers are confused. No wonder they say they are facing an administrative nightmare."

The reason I point that out is because that's a comment specifically on Bill 164 and it is from our senior municipal bureaucrats who select their language carefully. I think it should be a warning for the public that this government is trying to ram through legislation that clearly is not well-thought-out and that clearly is filled with mistakes.

1700

I want to comment just briefly on the job front, at the risk of jumping around. We get into the sort of, "you've got your numbers, I've got my numbers" kind of argument, but I will just simply use a couple of statistics from the office of economic policy, Ministry of Finance, just so there's no argument about the figures. What they show is that when Mike Harris became Premier in June 1995 — the public can't see this — there were 499,000 people in the province out of work. The numbers were released on Friday, three days ago, of the number of people out of work in Ontario in November. Almost halfway through the five years that Mike Harris has promised job creation there were actually 3,000 more people out of work, in November 1997, than there were the day Mike Harris became Premier: 502,000 people out of work.

Surely none of us can be proud of that record. I remember that in the Common Sense Revolution, one of the key statements was, "There are more than a half a million people unemployed in this province." Harris was attacking the previous government. Guess what? Two and a half years after Mike Harris became Premier there are actually more people out of work in the province than the day he became Premier. That's an important —

Mr Bradley: More people today?

Mr Phillips: More people out of work today than when he became Premier.

Mr Beaubien: Where do you get your information?

Mr Phillips: There's the member for Lambton, "Where do you get your information?" I hope Ernie Eves isn't hiding this from you. It's the Ministry of Finance. I will just say to any of the Conservative members, take a look yourself. I guarantee you the numbers released on Friday, three days ago: more people out of work in Ontario than the day he became Premier.

The member for Perth, who was sitting in your chair, Mr Speaker, until you came, raised this issue last week as well, and that's the youth unemployment. We now have the first 11 months of 1997. The youth unemployment rate in the province of Ontario is 17%.

Mr Wildman: Shame.

Mr Phillips: It is a shame and that is, by the way, higher than it was under the NDP. The rate when the NDP was in was lower than that. It's up substantially from last year. There were 10,000 fewer jobs in the first 11 months of 1997 over 1996.

The reason I stress that is that as long as the government says to us that it's not a problem, as long as it says, "Things are just great, the Common Sense Revolution is working," we will never deal with this issue. I guarantee you that we are sowing the seeds of substantial problems if we ignore that. Those are the facts. I just ask all of you, get this document. The Ministry of Finance puts it out monthly and that'll show the numbers. Somebody said, "Where do you get your numbers?" It's straight out of the Minister of Finance's numbers.

I want to talk about some of the things in Bill 164 that I think all of us should be focusing on. When the government introduced this bill, I immediately — first, I no longer listen to the title of bills because that is probably the least helpful description of a bill, "tax credits to create jobs." Let's do what I think increasingly people are now doing, and that's looking at the end of the government bills and working from there.

Mr Wildman: That's exactly right.

Mr Phillips: "That's exactly right," the member for Algoma said. The first thing I did was say, "All right, what's the government all about, really?" They'll put the good-news stuff in the front, so you go to the back. The first thing is, it sets up the Ontario Property Assessment Corporation Act. You can see that this has, frankly, little to do with a tax credit to create jobs; it is part of the downloading on to municipalities. That is going to transfer \$120 million of costs off the province on to property taxes.

Furthermore, as you get into the detail — and this is where I again rely on the comments of the clerks and treasurers. They had expected that the municipalities, in this transfer of responsibility, actually would have some responsibility for it. But they now find that when they look at the detail, as they say, "The minister may establish policies, procedures and standards" etc.

Their comment is: "Isn't this the government simply wanting to walk both sides of the street? On one hand to have a municipally owned and operated corporation and on the other hand for the government to be able to call the shots? Is this corporation independent or is this just a ruse? A ruse that the government can hide behind to avoid accountability for tax assessment matters."

One of the major parts of this bill is the establishment of the tax assessment corporation. It transfers \$120 million of costs off the province and on to municipalities, and the province, frankly, will still be basically totally in control. I must say that I think it's important we have uniformity of policies across the province. I don't question

that, but, as the clerks and treasurers said, it's just another way of downloading costs on to municipalities.

Mr Bradley: So the municipalities have to pay that now.

Mr Phillips: The property taxpayers will pay 100% of this, \$120 million. I will say, without any question of a doubt — and we will find out, I hope, shortly about the dumping or downloading of costs on to municipalities — based on the numbers the government has provided us so far, the province is going to dump at least \$660 million of new costs on to the property taxpayers, permanent new costs.

They're going to have some one-time pots of money to kind of sweeten the deal for 1998 and maybe 1999, as the government heads into a provincial election, and then the municipalities will be right out on that limb in the year 2000 when the government pulls back all of its one-time money and leaves the municipalities out to dry. That's the first thing I wanted to talk about in the bill. That's the assessment corporation, and it's under something called section G.

We then move to the previous section, section F. This is called "Amendments to Other Acts." I'll talk about some of the major amendments to other acts.

I think perhaps the most significant amendment to other acts is the one that gives the Minister of Finance the power to prescribe new transition ratios for a municipality in specified circumstances. That's jargon to mean in 1998 and in future years, here's what's going to happen: The Minister of Finance is by regulation going to set literally dozens and dozens of taxes. This new regulation says that if the minister happens to get it wrong, this new regulation will allow the minister to change it again.

Mr Bradley: Without the Legislature.

Mr Phillips: Without the Legislature, by the stroke of a pen.

The reason it's important — and again I go back to the municipalities, the clerks and treasurers, just so the public know. It is these people who have the responsibility for implementing all of this tax stuff; it's these people who have to actually get the taxes raised. They expressed serious concerns about this new provision in the bill that allows the Minister of Finance halfway through 1998 — he will set these ratios early in 1998, all the work will get done, and then he may find, oops, it's not working out, so he'll be able to set a whole set of new taxes.

1710

I know that sounds mildly confusing, but it gives the minister literally unfettered rights to set taxes. This is what the clerks and treasurers said about that:

"Furthermore, under section 18, schedule F" — that's what we're talking about, schedule F — "the Minister of Finance may, by regulation, prescribe new transition ratios where a significant shift in taxation occurs among classes of real property in the municipality." The association says, and listen to this: "This will create an administrative nightmare for municipalities, or it could be a vehicle for those municipalities who work with the prescribed ratios and later discover that the figures are un-

acceptable to demand assistance from the government. Either way, this is a recipe for administrative chaos."

Mr Bradley: Why would they do it?

Mr Phillips: My colleague says, "Why would they do it?" The fact is that a good idea, property tax reform — I've said constantly here that the system needs to be changed. The area I represent is dramatically treated unfairly; all that needs to be changed. The problem is they've taken a good idea and now it frankly is completely screwed up. The clerks and treasurers — this is language they don't normally use — call it "a recipe for administrative chaos."

We've been told that the whole idea here was to simplify the system, make it fairer, make it more transparent, have it one that everyone can understand and can feel confident in. The clerks and treasurers say that the property tax system is being immensely complicated by the institution of some 84 classes and subclasses, and up to 156 tax rates. That's all part of this — 156 tax rates. They say, "The combination of these factors will undoubtedly increase the complexity of the property tax system rather than streamline it."

Here we are being told by Premier Harris that this new system is going to streamline things, and the clerks and treasurers point out the complications. It is further complicated by this part of Bill 164 that gives the Minister of Finance literally unfettered rights not only to set them initially, but then if he doesn't like them, to change them halfway through the year.

Mr Bradley: By regulation.

Mr Phillips: By regulation. That's where they say, "Either way, this is a recipe for administrative chaos." The clerks and treasurers went on to warn us that the way this thing is being set up, and they use the language, here it is: "Implementation on January 1, 1998, is a high-risk situation for the stability and financial health of the municipal sector. There are some municipalities in Ontario that simply will not be able to cope with this situation."

They went on to say, by the way, that the association of clerks and treasurers finds overwhelming the amount of regulation to be set by the minister and the extent of the minister's involvement in a process that's supposed to be run by the municipalities.

I point out that part of the bill that adds to this chaos and complexity and uncertainty, and frankly, in our opinion, should be done through legislation and not by regulation. We moved some amendments to say this should be done by legislation.

The proof of that is that these other matters, these tax credit matters dealing with the film industry, the tax credits for co-op students, all of that is being done through legislation. The first 120 pages of this bill are the legislation to implement those important but, compared to the property tax issue, small changes in the tax system. But we are going to do the rest by regulation.

Bill 164 also, in our opinion, raises some questions around disclosure of information. We asked the civil servants if they could give us an explanation of how this is going to work, and they said they couldn't. They didn't

have the right person there. Bill 164, it says here, "is amended to authorize the collection, use and disclosure of information," other than health information, by the way, but all other information, on a much broader basis. So information that previously was protected now becomes much more broadly distributed and available.

Interjection: It's crazy.

Mr Phillips: My colleague says it's crazy. All of us are beginning to recognize the challenge to, on the one hand, have efficient government but, on the other hand, have some semblance of protection of our information, our privacy. As I say, I recall that one of the concerns on photo-radar was that. This bill does dramatically increase the availability of information.

We've talked about the transition ratios. The bill also amends the Municipal Act to give Mike Harris the power to prepare the information that goes out on the property tax bill.

Mr Bradley: Ah, this is the censorship provision.

Mr Phillips: Yes. I remember as clear as can be that Mike Harris used to say: "I trust the duly elected local people. I have faith in them. They are elected. They represent their people. They should have the respect of us here at Queen's Park." But when that happens to get in his road, he says: "Stand back. I am going to take away from you the right to communicate how your tax bill was arrived at and how it's going to be paid."

I can't think of anything quite as fundamental as the locally elected municipal politicians setting the tax rate for their area — by the way, they go through the most public process imaginable, and rightly so — yet they're not even going to be allowed to write the message of how the tax bill was arrived at, why it was arrived at that way and explain to their local taxpayers the background on it.

Mr Bradley: Why would the government prevent that?

Mr Phillips: My colleague said, "Why would the government prevent that?" Here is why they will: Because in 1998 we are going to have chaos in our property tax system. That's not me speaking; that's the clerks and treasurers. I'll just tell you a few things. One is that nobody —

Interjection.

Mr Phillips: I'll ignore the member for Scarborough-Ellesmere, who used to be a municipal politician.

Mr Gerretsen: She should know better.

Mr Phillips: She should know better. Mike Harris is going to be sending out the 1998 property tax bills in July or August. The last date to appeal your taxes is June 29.

1720

Mr Bradley: That's backwards.

Mr Phillips: That's backwards, as my colleague said. Mike Harris will be setting —

Interjections.

Mr Phillips: I just say to my business friends, look at your property tax bill in 1998. Mike Harris will be setting over half of it. Mike Harris will set well over half of your business property taxes. There will be no public debate. Even the Legislature will not see it. It will never come

here. It will be done by something called minister's regulation at the stroke of a pen and that will be set.

By the way, nobody will know what their property taxes are in 1998 until at least July, probably August or September.

Mr Wildman: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: It's very important. As the member for Scarborough-Agincourt is explaining the ramifications of this bill, there are not enough here to listen to him speak, so I wonder if you could check for quorum?

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Would you please check if there is a quorum?

Clerk at the Table: A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk at the Table: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Scarborough-Agincourt.

Mr Phillips: We were discussing why Mike Harris would want to control what goes out in the 1998 property tax bill. I was just saying that I guess he doesn't trust the municipalities to tell their local property taxpayers what's happening. It actually is totally inconsistent with what Mike Harris said before the election. I think our municipal politicians should rightly be angered about it.

Again I go back to the clerks and treasurers and what they said about the cumulative effects of Bill 106, 149, 160 and now 164. Just so the public is aware, 106 and 149 are the property tax bills, 160 is the bill that gives Mike Harris the power to unilaterally set \$6 billion worth of property taxes, and 164 is the bill we're debating. They said: "We no longer have a municipal property tax system. We have a provincial tax system administered by municipalities." In other words, the province has now moved in and taken over the property tax system. "The province controls the education tax, it determines classes and sub-classes of land, it allocates tax ratios and transition ratios. And now it may determine what will go on the tax notice."

You can see the level of frustration now among our senior municipal civil servants about Bill 164.

On the further provisions in Bill 164, again I repeat, here we are and this bill will be law a week this Thursday. The first opportunity we had —

Mr Bradley: No public hearings?

Mr Phillips: No public hearings, no opportunity for public input, rammed through in typical fashion in a matter of days. We've been through just a few of the concerns within the bill, the latest one being that this now gives the government the right to write the language that goes in the tax bill. If anybody wants to deviate, they must get the express approval of the minister. So if Mel Lastman wants to put in his tax bill anything that Mike Harris doesn't already write for him, he's got to come down here on bended knee and say, "Premier, can I tell our taxpayers a little bit more about this?" Mike will have to say, "Well, write it out, and if I agree with it, I'll sign it." But for someone like Mel Lastman, and I dare say any mayor —

Mr Bradley: What about Hazel?

Mr Phillips: — Hazel McCallion or any mayor or reeve or warden in Ontario, surely this is the ultimate insult, that you cannot even tell your local property taxpayers the basis on which their property taxes were arrived at.

As I say, part of this bill is around downloading. It is downloading the assessment-department cost of \$120 million. It amends, as I say, two bills that we passed last week after an awful lot of debate and concern across the province. In a matter of days, we're amending it again. I keep saying to my business friends, this government is —

Mr Tom Froese (St Catharines-Brock): Do you have some? Jim says you don't have any.

Mr Phillips: I will just say that the business community have to shake their heads at this government, to be introducing a bill like that, where we are amending —

Mr Froese: Jim Bradley says you don't have any business friends. I always listen to the member for St Catharines.

Mr Phillips: I hear one of the members from St Catharines barracking —

Mr Bradley: St Catharines-Brock.

Mr Phillips: St Catharines-Brock. But how absurd can you be? We passed the bill last week and now this amends, in a very significant way, the very bill we passed last week. It's crazy.

Mr Bradley: Wait till I tell Jamie Almas what this is all about.

Mr Phillips: Think about this, member for St Catharines-Brock: Any Minister of Finance can set these taxes in January or February and the municipalities will go through hoops trying to get it all set, and then the government, in May or June, can say, "We've decided to change our mind," and can change it with the stroke of a pen. Surely that's no way to run an operation.

I say to all of us, I don't know who's in charge over there any longer, but to introduce a bill that is 200 pages long, that has this many changes in it, that our senior municipal clerks and treasurers say — and they study this stuff; they say that surely this bill, Bill 164, "illustrates better than anything that this government, in its haste, is making legislation by the seat of its pants, without proper thought or planning. Yesterday's bill is amended by today's which will likely be amended by tomorrow's."

For the public, I think there's a statement that perhaps best sums up this government. Whether it was dealing with our education system in Bill 160, whether it was dealing with the — do you remember the downloading? It was just a year ago. We started that downloading process, and all education was going to come off, there was a \$500-million mistake. They finally had to admit there was a \$1-billion problem. Chaos. Total chaos. Everything Mike Harris touches turns to chaos. Good ideas evaporate.

As I say, there's nobody better than the clerks and treasurers to point out — that illustrates better than anything — that this government, in its haste, is making legislation by the seat of its pants, without proper thought or planning. Yesterday's bill, amended by today, will likely be amended by tomorrow.

We've got a government that has taken John Snobelen's advice to a fine art. John said, "Create a crisis"; Harris is doing it, everywhere.

1730

Mr Bradley: I'm pleased that the member for Scarborough-Agincourt has allowed me a few minutes to contribute to this debate and directly to the matters that are contained within this bill, as I always do.

I want to indicate first of all that this is a bill that amends several other pieces of legislation where the government made a mistake in the first place. The opposition parties, as I recall — my friend from Algoma will confirm this for the third party — said we would be prepared to open Bill 160 up to allow for further amendments. This was the day they shut the door at 5 o'clock and the Minister of Education didn't have all of his amendments in at the time, and some of the ones he had in were draft amendments. Rather than accepting the kind offer of the opposition parties to open up Bill 160 once again to allow for further amendments from the government, and hopefully from the opposition, the government said, "No, we don't want to do that."

With Bill 149, another assessment bill, the offer was made again. We said, "Why don't you make further amendments to the bill?" This government is so obsessed with what are called time allocation motions, motions which have the effect of closing off, choking off debate, that they did not take up the offer of the opposition to open the bills for further amendments.

So we have 200 pages or more of mistakes that have to be corrected. These are corrections of those mistakes, in this bill. It's what we call an omnibus bill — I mentioned earlier I think most people would consider it to be an ominous bill — which has a few tricks in it, a few hostages in it. With most bills there are some provisions with which one agrees.

Interjection.

Mr Bradley: The member for Scarborough East has talked about Scrooge. I don't know how he gets into this, "It seems like Scrooge." I don't know what that means in relation to the member for Scarborough East, but it probably has some significance totally outside of this Legislature.

What I want to say about this bill is its back-door amendments to other pieces of legislation. There was a very contentious issue on which the Speaker has ruled. The Speaker rules as he believes he should rule on each of these issues. On this one I am not happy with the final decision which was made — but I always respect the rulings of the Speaker of this House — because I think the door is open to the government now, when it makes a mistake, instead of admitting it and dealing with it in the piece of legislation before the House, to simply find another bill, an omnibus bill, an all-encompassing bill, throw everything but the kitchen sink into it and then end up after that passing such a piece of legislation.

Here we are in the last two weeks of the session and we're dealing with a major, important bill where there will

be no public hearings. I think the public would like to be heard on this.

I look at some of the things that I see as ominous in this. The first I see is the complete muzzling of municipalities. What the people at the municipal level like to do with their tax bill to give more explanation to the people they represent is to explain why the tax bill is what it is, as high as it might be, for instance. Many of them wanted to explain this time the impact of downloading of responsibilities from the province on to the backs of municipalities.

But Mike Harris issued an edict which said: "I will censor the information that comes to property tax owners because I don't want them to see the effect of this downloading. I will decide what will be found on this tax bill in terms of information, not your local municipal politicians."

Even those who are apologists for the Harris government on municipal councils are going to have a hard time justifying this one. I will be expecting to see them make a real effort to persuade this government, before this bill finally passes the Legislature, to drop this censorship provision, which muzzles, as I mentioned, and throttles local municipalities so they cannot put the necessary information on the tax bill — yet another example of Big Brother, of intimidation, of the bullying, in my view, of this government towards those with whom they deal.

The transfer of cost of assessment to municipalities is yet another cost. My friend the member for Scarborough Centre smiles. He knows what I'm saying is true, that the provincial government used to assume the cost of assessment, and now the people of Scarborough — we can't call it that any more — Toronto are going to have to assume that cost.

Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East): For another two weeks.

Mr Bradley: For another two weeks I'm told they can say that.

I don't think Hazel McCallion is going to be very happy about that or, for that matter, Tim Rigby, the new mayor of the city of St Catharines. None of these people are going to be happy that in fact they are having the cost of assessment turned over to municipalities from the provincial government, which had that cost under its purview previously.

We understand why the government has set up a private agency. That's because when the bad news comes out, they want to say, "Oh, it's not Mike Harris's tax bill" — even though he has brand-new, expanded powers in this bill — "it's this agency, an arm's-length agency." The blame will be sent to the municipality, without explanation, because it can't explain to its taxpayers on the tax bill itself, or this agency will be to blame for any mistakes that might be found in assessment.

In 1998, as my colleague has mentioned, and into the future, the Minister of Finance will set dozens of property taxes for all of Ontario, and if he wants to change it in the future, he doesn't have to come back to this House where we have elected members, such as the member for Dur-

ham Centre, who can pass judgement on this; he simply goes behind closed doors in the cabinet room and signs. A quick signature and Mike Harris has that power. Just as we have the new Mike Harris gambling halls coming into Ontario, they will have this provision as well.

As the Association of Municipal Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario said — they're non-political people — "This is a recipe for administrative chaos." I agree with the clerks and treasurers of Ontario.

There is a part in here that affects POSO, as it's known, the Province of Ontario Savings Office. This is a small operation. Some people have their savings in there. It's a little different from others. It works well, but because it's working well and it's public sector, this government wants to get rid of it, because they don't want to see any success stories in the public sector. Jane Becker, who is a Toronto journalist, wrote an excellent article in the Toronto Star about this, and I have had some calls from constituents, such as John Hall in St Catharines, who have called to express their concern about the changes to the Province of Ontario Savings Office. I can believe that the member for Wentworth East, moderate individual that he is, former excellent commentator on channel 11 — I hope to see him back on the air in a couple of years, because he did such a good job in that position. But I want to share with members of the Legislature and with the public at large what this article says about the Province of Ontario Savings Office, which is going to be privatized, in my view, under this bill. Jane Becker says the following:

"In its headlong rush to privatize everything that breathes, and even some things that don't, such as Highway 407, the Harris government has put the finger on the inoffensive, profitable (\$11.2 million for the province last year), unique and useful Province of Ontario Savings Office.

"The provincial government bank — one of the best-kept secrets in the financial community — serves about 50,000 contented depositors with simple, hassle-free and above all pleasant banking at 23 branches and five agencies across Ontario, including six Toronto branches. In some places, there is no other bank in the area.

"Its deposits — about \$2.1 billion at last count — go to the province's consolidated revenue fund, from where they can be loaned to the government and its various agencies at interest slightly below what we pay to an outside lender." So it benefits the government of Ontario itself, the taxpayers of Ontario.

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She goes on to say: "At the same time, it pays depositors slightly more on their savings accounts and GICs than do the chartered banks. Its few service charges, set out on a single sheet" — in other words, its few service charges and it just has very few — "in contrast to the involved booklets of the major banks, are about half as much as the other banks. If you're lucky enough to have more than the Canada Deposit Insurance Corp's \$60,000 insurable limit in your account, no need to worry. The province guarantees every dollar.

"Contrary to popular belief, most depositors are not civil servants, although the latter may form the majority of customers at branches near government offices such as the Queen's Park branch in Toronto.

"You can't get a loan, a mutual fund or an RRSP at a savings office, but you'll never be hounded out of a lineup and told to use the ATM — the POSO has no ATMs and few lineups — or charged that abomination, a monthly maintenance fee. The staff doesn't change every month or so — there are about 190 employees all told — and go out of their way to give good service such as telephoning a customer if they must debit an account.

"Now the provincial government is threatening to change it all. In April, it told savings office customers by letter that it was reviewing the operation. Possibilities for the future were 'improved efficiency' under provincial ownership, a partnership with an existing bank or trust company, or outright sale. It invited customers to contact the privatization office if they wanted to comment.

"They did so by the score. POSO director David Brand says the office was flooded with calls and letters, most squarely against any privatization." It doesn't say whether Conrad Black wrote in or not.

"The government has now named CIBC Wood Gundy to conduct a review of POSO operations and report by mid-August. Talk about inviting the fox into the henhouse.

"All this makes little sense. The savings office is profitable, it works well for the government, customers like it and there's no obvious outside group lusting to take it over.

"Brand says, however, that the POSO" — that is, the Province of Ontario Savings Office — "must spend money to modernize and upgrade services. Its systems and computer networks are outdated. It cannot, for instance, issue credit cards with present equipment.

"It's reached a major decisive point as to whether the province should do the upgrading and expansion or whether it's better left to the private sector," he says.

"The savings office was conceived by the United Farmers government of 1919 in order to keep its election promise to small farmers to pay interest on small deposits — something the chartered banks didn't do in those days. It began operating in 1922. When the Conservatives returned to office the next year they kept it, for a time using deposits to make small loans to farmers in conjunction with the Ministry of Agriculture's farm loan program." Good idea.

"In the thirties, Premier Mitchell Hepburn floated a \$20 million loan through the POSO" —

Mr Froese: On a point of order, Speaker: The member for St Catharines is very familiar with what the rules of the House are with respect to speaking to the bill. Mr Speaker, you've noticed him speak before. He rarely ever talks about what's in the bill; he talks about everything else. He's reading a newspaper article here. If I didn't know him as well as I do, I would think he was just trying to kill time. Could you ask him to speak to Bill 164?

The Acting Speaker: The member for St Catharines heard you. Member for St Catharines.

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I know the member for St Catharines-Brock knows the rules very well too and I'd ask him, along with the Clerk, to check and see if there's a quorum present.

The Acting Speaker: Would you please check if we have a quorum.

Clerk Assistant: A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk Assistant: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The member for St Catharines.

Mr Bradley: I hesitate to say this, but the member hasn't read the bill, because of course the Province of Ontario Savings Office is in this bill, the provision is in it.

What the article I'm reading is doing is pointing out the danger of doing what this bill says. This person, ahead of time, was pointing that out. I'm glad we have enough members who are back from the caviar table in the Tory caucus room to be able to hear the rest of my remarks. Actually it's not true. I want to say to the people out there I was just fooling when I said that. It's filet mignon, it's not caviar.

Anyway, I continue because this is directly speaking to the bill, as the member for Wentworth East knows. It goes on to say:

"In the thirties, Premier Mitchell Hepburn floated a \$20 million loan through the POSO as part of his continuing war with Bay Street. Successive governments have contemplated closing it but constituents' protests — many branches have been in Tory ridings — always forestalled them.

"Now the Harris Tories have leapt in where their predecessors feared to tread.

"Last spring, the savings office held customer appreciation days with balloons and refreshments to mark its 75th anniversary. Around the quiche table at one branch a number of us thought it was the customers who should be appreciating the savings office.

"Is the government now going to destroy 75 years of good relations by handing us over to a mega-bank? If it does, you can say goodbye to the last shred of civilized, gougeless, customer-friendly banking in Ontario — the kind all bank patrons would have if they could design the bank themselves."

This is Jane Becker. She must have known this bill was coming. She must have seen the provision in this bill that greases the skids for this government to privatize the Province of Ontario Savings Office. I know some of the former Conservative members of the Legislature who are watching today will want to get on their phones immediately to their local members of Parliament, their Tory members, to tell them, "Cease and desist; here is something that is successful." The government is trying to undermine it and I think it would be very unwise to do so.

The bill does something else, which is establishing the legislative framework to privatize the Province of Ontario Savings Office. It has exemptions from freedom of information protections to allow the government to share

information on taxpayers with other agencies involved in collections.

Many of the people I know who have supported this government, who themselves were at one time presidents of the YPC and are now perhaps running their father's business, have said, "We are concerned when any government" — I don't care what political stripe — "starts to intrude into the private information of people," and this bill allows that to happen.

It is setting up new fees for appeals for tax problems. I heard today the Minister of Education get up and he said, "A previous government was responsible for 32 tax increases." I see in this bill now we're going to see more.

I've counted 187 in just two years, 187 Conservative tax increases, because Mike Harris said, "A user fee is a tax increase," and I agreed with Mike Harris when he said that. But his government is responsible already, and this is all I could find so far, for 187 new tax increases. Because they're in the form of user fees, they do not take into account a person's ability to pay. If you're the wealthiest person in Ontario, you would pay the same fee as the poorest person in Ontario to get a particular service, for instance, if you wanted to appeal according to what your tax problems are. It mentions that the bill is allowing the minister to change the new property tax transition ratios during the course of the year after the rates were initially set if the minister decides the change has been too dramatic. Last, the legislation sets up the Ontario Property Assessment Corp, which I've dealt with.

There are many sleepers in this bill, many hostages, many provisions the government had hoped nobody would look at. They'd say, "Well, it's this thick," and I think they charged — Bud, tell me, was it \$30 for Bill 160?

Mr Wildman: Yes.

Mr Bradley: This I would guess is about \$30 as well if somebody wants to get it. If you're rich, no problem; you write the cheque. You cut the cheque easily for \$30. But what about the person who is having a difficult time out there and wants to look at this bill? Perhaps they have their meagre savings in the Province of Ontario Savings Office. This bill will not be available to them unless they are prepared to fork over maybe \$30 or whatever the government is charging for this bill.

They might say, "Maybe I can get a subscription to Hansard or see my neighbour's subscription to Hansard so I can see what the debate was about." You would know, Mr Speaker, that this government has cut off Hansard. No longer can an individual in this province receive the tran-

scripts of this Legislature independently, as an independent subscriber. Now they have to be on the Internet. They have to have an expensive computer to be able to access this.

Again we see the government skewing its policies towards those who are already in a privileged position. Even some of those people — just because people are people of means, that doesn't mean they don't have compassion for others and a sense of fairness. I think what the government is finding out now is that even people who are financially well off, who are in a privileged position, want to see fairness for others and are prepared to see that. They want to see a government working towards fairness for others. They won't find it in Bill 164. If they want information on their assessment, the tax bill comes out from the municipality and Mike Harris has censored that.

I know that the Conservatives on local councils in the Niagara region will be immediately contacting their Conservative MPPs to say, "Would you give us permission to put on the tax bill what we consider to be the reasons for any increases or decreases that might be there?" instead of censoring that tax bill. I would think that Joyce Trimmer, were she the mayor of Scarborough — when Scarborough was still in existence, for instance, Joyce would be very unhappy to have her council censored. I'm sure Mel Lastman won't like that. He's an outspoken individual and he won't like that. That's contained in this bill. It is a bill censoring municipalities in Ontario.

I hope every municipality passes a resolution and sends it to this provincial government to say, "We object to the censorship that you are imposing on our municipal council." They don't have to worry because there's going to be a slush fund in the first year. That's to get the Conservatives over to the next election. So we will not see the real changes for municipalities, the real impact of downloading, until the slush fund is finished, until the provincial election takes place. But the clever, perceptive municipal political representatives are assessing the impact of this bill and the downloading in the long term for those municipalities.

I understand the government whip wants me to adjourn the debate at this time, so I will, if he wants me to, adjourn the debate, it being close to 6 o'clock.

The Acting Speaker: It being close to 6 o'clock, this House stands adjourned until 6:30.

The House adjourned at 1755.

Evening sitting reported in volume B.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
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Clerk Assistant / Greffière adjointe: Deborah Deller

Clerks at the Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

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		Lanark-Renfrew	Jordan, W. Leo (PC)
		Lawrence	Cordiano, Joseph (L)
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Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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Dwight Duncan, Tim Hudak, Frank Klees,
Lyn McLeod, John L. Parker, Bruce Smith
Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

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No. 257B

N° 257B

ISSN 1180-2987

**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

First Session, 36th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Première session, 36^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Monday 8 December 1997

Lundi 8 décembre 1997

Speaker
Honourable Chris Stockwell

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Président
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 8 December 1997

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 8 décembre 1997

The House met at 1831.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Hon David Turnbull (Minister without Portfolio): I seek unanimous consent to call second reading of An Act to amalgamate the Toronto Hospital and the Ontario Cancer Institute and to amend the Cancer Act, which stands in the name of Mr Gilchrist.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Is there unanimous consent to proceed? It is agreed.

TORONTO HOSPITAL ACT, 1997

LOI DE 1997 SUR L'HÔPITAL DE TORONTO

Mr Gilchrist moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 172, An Act to amalgamate the Toronto Hospital and the Ontario Cancer Institute and to amend the Cancer Act / Loi visant à fusionner l'hôpital de Toronto et l'Institut ontarien du cancer et à modifier la Loi sur le cancer.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): The member would like to make a statement?

Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East): I would indeed. It gives me great honour to have been asked to be the sponsor of this important piece of legislation, not just for the technical changes that it does make to two different acts, but for the symbolism behind the bill as well.

First, I'd like to draw to the attention of my colleagues on both sides of the House that we're joined today by four individuals from the two merging hospitals. We have Dr Alan Hudson, who of course is the president and CEO of Toronto Hospital and Princess Margaret as well; we have Mr David Allen, the vice-president of public and community affairs; we have Dr John Wright, who's the chair of the medical advisory committee; and we have Ms Bella Martin, who is the legal counsel and director of medical affairs. I appreciate their joining us here in the chamber today.

I would like to first dispose of some of the technical issues that are dealt with in this bill. They're very important, and it sends a tremendous message to the people of Ontario that hospitals across this province have recognized the importance of finding new and better ways of delivering services, that it's not just how many dollars we spend but how they are spent.

As the title of the bill would suggest, the purpose of this bill is to amalgamate two hospitals under one governance

structure. Those two hospitals are the Toronto Hospital and the Ontario Cancer Institute, which is otherwise known as the Princess Margaret Hospital. They'll be amalgamated under one name, the Toronto Hospital.

The bill makes these two hospitals into one corporation and also makes consequential changes to the Cancer Act itself. The Ministry of Health is very supportive of this change. It's my understanding that we'll be hearing from the other two parties later on, and I believe I can say that this bill will find unanimous favour on both sides of the House.

The reason the ministry is as supportive as it is, first off, is that the move is consistent with the recommendation made by our colleague Mr Wood and his agencies, boards and commissions task force, which recommended that all oncology services be moved under one roof in one governance structure. It's consistent with the ministry's direction to integrate radiation treatment services with chemotherapy and surgery wherever possible. The merger is also consistent with the final direction of the Health Services Restructuring Commission, which was issued earlier this year on July 23.

The bill itself will allow a very long-standing series of discussions between these two hospitals to finally come to a conclusion — a very successful conclusion, I might note. It will create one fully integrated cancer treatment centre, one of only five integrated service providers of this kind in all of North America. Surgery, medicine, radiation and chemotherapy will all be provided in one state-of-the-art facility.

There's no doubt that the Ontario Cancer Institute already has a tremendous reputation, not just here in Ontario but across Canada and indeed internationally. Now, once joined with the services that are currently provided at the Toronto Hospital, it can only improve in terms of its stature and the range of services it provides.

As I mentioned earlier, this merger is the culmination of a lot of hard work. This is just the final stage in a long-standing process that dates back five years, five years of quite selfless determination on the part of the two existing boards at the two hospitals to find some common ground and, at the end of the day, to move to in effect eliminate their own positions and create a joint board. All that remains now is for us to pass this statutory effort to ensure that the good works they accomplished in their negotiations are brought to final fruition.

The merger has also been staff-driven. It needed no government direction. It was truly accomplished through the good works of the people who are committed first and

foremost to the patients they serve in both those two hospitals. Quite frankly, the focus and the end result of our passing of this bill will be better patient care.

The Princess Margaret Hospital, just to remind everyone, was opened on University Avenue just about two years ago and replaced a much older facility that used to be situated on Sherbourne Street. Giving credit where it's due, I know that former Premier Rae, who lost his brother to leukaemia at the old Princess Margaret facility, was integrally involved or certainly keen to see the sort of direction taken that we are now reflecting in this bill before us here today.

Currently, 40% of the facility at Princess Margaret is sitting empty. The goal of the two hospitals is to move all of the other oncology services across the street and create, in effect, one centre of excellence. Right now, there's no doubt that tremendous patient care is being provided, but when you go to one hospital perhaps for the chemotherapy, you go through the process of signing up as a new patient, filling out all those forms and collecting the information, and then when you go to another facility to have a different service provided, that process is repeated again. So not just in terms of combining the medicine itself but of combining the bureaucratic issues and providing better patient care and a more efficient use of our resources, those too will be inevitable results of this bill.

One of the reasons I was asked to sponsor this bill, as some of my colleagues know, is that I lost someone very special to me to leukaemia nine years ago, and I know the effect this devastating disease has on people, and not just the family; no doubt they were devastated, and certainly my life was changed. But Natalie Munn was also a very fine citizen in her community, recognized for her work coaching figure skating students. In fact, this year one of her former students has reached fourth spot in all of Canada, and it's indeed a bit of a legacy to the work she performed.

While it's sobering to reflect back on those sorts of things, and every one of us in this chamber and most people in Ontario have been touched by the tragedy of cancer, we can't dwell on the past. There is no doubt that no matter where one stands on the issue of hospital restructuring in general, and I would hope that this forum here tonight does not become grist for that mill, we recognize that there will continue to be 25-year-olds struck down by leukaemia, there will continue to be more Natalie Munns.

Until we recognize the importance of dedicating as many dollars as we can to the actual care of patients, to cutting the administrative costs, to focusing dollars on the ailments that are afflicting us today — and, quite frankly, as we've seen health care needs change in this province, in large measure they're a reflection of the fact that the ailments themselves have changed. We're treating diseases that were unheard of 15 and 20 years ago. At the same time, new technologies have come forward, and we have to be certain that at all times this province has the resources to invest in those new technologies so that there is never an argument that can be made that we stand

second to anyone else in this world in terms of the care we offer to patients, particularly patients facing the terror and the devastating consequences of something like cancer.

1840

Again, the bill itself, while fairly technical, has to at the same time represent to us through its symbolism one of the main reasons why we're serving in this chamber. I don't think it's too great a stretch to suggest to people on both sides of this House that our goal in seeking office, whether it was motivated by what we saw in the education system, what we saw on our roads or what we saw in health care around us, that our motivation first and foremost is to take a great province and make it better; to find those areas where we're not quite the world's best and make sure that we've dedicated the dollars and the resources to achieve that premier position.

I have no doubt that this bill will serve not just as the legislative vehicle to allow tremendous improvements in patient care offered by the new merger and the merged hospital, but will also serve as a model to other hospitals and other government agencies that their staff, working with the government, can achieve these kinds of innovative approaches to the administration and governance of the issues that we are charged with in this chamber.

At the end of the day, we will have arguably the second or third-best cancer treatment facility in all of North America, and maybe beyond this continent as well. The fact of the matter is, we can look for similar successes in other areas of this province and in other treatment issues as well.

I would call on all of our colleagues to put aside any partisanship as we approach the concept of health restructuring and recognize that the true heroes who are to be applauded for what is before us here today are the doctors and other staff at the Toronto Hospital and the Ontario Cancer Institute who have invested so much of themselves in this initiative, who have committed their lives to serving patients in Ontario and who have now turned to us to give that one last push to allow this great initiative to come to fruition.

With that, I know my colleagues on the other side of the House are eager to add their comments. I would simply close by encouraging all members to support this important bill on second and third reading this evening.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments? Further debate?

Mr David Caplan (Oriole): I'm pleased to join the debate. I will say at the outset that I and our caucus will support this piece of legislation. We understand and appreciate that this merger is the result of a voluntary and cooperative effort on behalf of both hospitals. These two organizations are already functionally merged and this bill only seeks to make that arrangement legal.

We are helping this bill to pass in order to make sure that patients are not further disadvantaged by cutbacks which are making this merger necessary. In fact, it is important that we put on the record the scale of cuts that these hospitals have endured over the past two years. I'll just summarize very quickly. By the fiscal year 1996-97,

Princess Margaret Hospital saw a cut of over \$3 million; the Toronto Hospital almost \$21 million. In fiscal year 1997-98, this government imposed another cut of \$4.25 million on Princess Margaret Hospital and another almost \$22.5 million on the Toronto Hospital; \$50.5 million in two years out of hospitals here in Metropolitan Toronto, out of cancer care, out of general care. It is important that we remember the context in which this merger is happening.

But again, we are helping this bill to pass in order to make sure that patients are not further disadvantaged by the \$50.5 million already withdrawn from these two hospitals. Unlike the government, we will put patients first when we're given an opportunity to do so and that is why we will be supporting this bill.

We are concerned, however, with the loss of the Ontario Cancer Institute from provincial control. Previously the province appointed all 15 directors, including members from several hospitals. With this legislation, the government is moving control to one private, non-profit hospital, and that's the Toronto Hospital.

We're also concerned about the closed nature of governance of this new corporation. The governance only permits a minority of publicly elected members as opposed to ex officio and appointed members, and these are elected from companies and individuals who donate \$1,000 or more. We recognize that other new merged institutions, such as Humber River Regional Hospital, which has no public membership at all, are even more closed, but an opportunity to create a community connection and better accountability has been missed.

I would also acknowledge that the Toronto Hospital board at least meets in public. I would encourage other hospitals to adopt this same practice, a practice that the Toronto Hospital has pledged to continue. I think that public accountability is well served when the doors are open and community members are allowed to know what's happening in their institutions.

While I understand the logistical reasons for supporting this bill, it should be in no way misconstrued or taken that I or my caucus accept the government's general direction where health care restructuring is concerned. We believe fundamentally that Mike Harris and the Conservative government are on the wrong track as far as health care in the province of Ontario is concerned, that closing hospitals is not good for patient care.

In fact, this government believes or seems to believe that bigger is somehow better. I certainly don't subscribe to that notion. I know when I read the documentation that was put forward by Mr Harris and the Conservative government during the election, they didn't seem to subscribe to that notion either. It's funny how times have changed and how actions certainly have not lived up to the words during that election period in 1995.

This new Toronto Hospital Corp will have a budget of approximately \$640 million per year, nearly one tenth of the whole hospital budget for the province. It is an immense corporation. It is an immense responsibility and I certainly trust that the parties to this agreement, mainly

the Toronto Hospital, Princess Margaret Hospital, the provincial government and the Minister of Health will accept the responsibility to provide world-class patient care, research and cancer treatment.

We here in the Liberal Party will continue to monitor the situation and will hold the government accountable should these goals not be met under the proposed arrangement. That is our role. We take it very seriously and I hope the government members too would hold their front bench — the Premier, their Minister of Health — accountable should the goals of providing patient care, research and cancer treatment not be met.

Mike Harris's government has wreaked havoc on health care and on the health care community since it took office. Cuts to hospital budgets and ordered closures have indeed put patient care at risk. In fact, I would say that with the undue haste we've seen, with the lack of vision, as the current Minister of Health has said exists or does not exist within this government, I believe that this government has botched health care reform from the outset. They had no plan; they still have no plan. They had no vision; they still have no vision.

We hope that the appropriate supports will be put in place to allow this merger to be successful. I don't think anyone would disagree that it is important to have the appropriate community and province-wide supports in order to have a health care system which meets the needs of patients.

1850

There are numerous examples across the province of orders to close, merge or amalgamate local hospitals which have gone awry. This government sent in Dr Sinclair and his commission to drop the bombs, to leave communities to make sense of what's left. That is a real shame, because it is the responsibility of this government, of this Premier, of this Minister of Health to make decisions, to have a vision, to have a plan for patient care, not to tear it all apart and leave it to local communities to try to fit those pieces back together like a jigsaw puzzle, without having the cover and without having the box.

They've left no plan, aside from taking dollars out, because that is in fact the true agenda of this government: to take dollars out, not to put patient care first. I implore the government, I implore the members opposite, I implore the Minister of Health and I implore the Premier, please put patients first. You can enhance services. If that is truly your goal, you can provide those services to people who desperately need them.

We will be following the ramifications of this merger. What this bill does is legalize the creation of possibly the largest mega-hospital in the country. With the support of the University of Toronto, this new corporation can wield great power, and it can be wielded for good or for ill. It is the responsibility of the board of the hospital, it is the responsibility of the government to ensure that it is directed towards patients. I issue a caution to be wary of this reality. I hope this merger turns out to be in the patients' best interests. I know that we on the opposition side in the Liberal caucus will do what we can to ensure

that patients' interests come first, but we will follow this bill with great interest and ensure that patients and patient care is protected, not only in Metropolitan Toronto but in Ontario.

I thank you, Mr Speaker, for the opportunity of joining in tonight's debate.

The Acting Speaker: Comments and questions? Further debate?

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): It's a pleasure for me to be able to rise this evening in support of this bill brought in by the member for Scarborough East, which has long been looked forward to as the legal way in which to make real a process that has gone on for a very long time and for which many people have worked and hoped for a long time. I too welcome those from both Princess Margaret and the Toronto General Hospital and congratulate them for the work they've done in voluntarily bringing these two organizations together.

It is indeed an important task they have undertaken. I think most of us wish that hospital mergers could be accomplished with this kind of cooperation and this kind of focus on the purpose of the two organizations that are joining. It's very much to the credit of all those who have worked so hard on the staff and on the boards of these two organizations that we're here doing the sort of penultimate legal action that makes real what you have attempted to do.

When our government funded the change of location of Princess Margaret Hospital, it was an investment on the part of the people of Ontario into the kind of care program that we knew would be important for the new century, that the increasing numbers of people who require the kind of intensive expertise in cancer care that has long been recognized at Princess Margaret Hospital and the Ontario Cancer Institute was something that needed to be a focus of attention. The kind of facilities that were able to be built through that investment, the closeness to the other university hospitals, was an extremely important part of trying to ensure that that investment would result in concentrated care, research and teaching around cancer.

Today we see that dream becoming a reality in a very real way, and it is important for all of us to recognize that.

The member for Oriole remarked that this will become a mega-hospital, a huge corporation. Certainly reading the bill, it focuses of course on the legal entity, the corporation. It will be a large corporation. I think it is only fair to say that there are many people in this province who have some qualms about the growing corporatization of health care and will be looking very hard at the way in which this merger works for the benefit of patients and for the benefit of all of Ontario, I would say even Canada, as a result of the teaching and research that will happen.

I think it's important, given that the issue of corporatization has been raised, to read out the objectives of this corporation as they are laid out in the bill. The objects of the corporation, under section 4 of the bill, are:

Most primary, "(a) to establish and provide programs of patient care and community health, and to equip, maintain, operate and conduct hospital teaching and research facilities;

"(b) to maintain and operate, among other priority programs, facilities known as the Ontario Cancer Institute/Princess Margaret Hospital for cancer research, diagnosis and treatment;

"(c) to conduct programs of education and research in fields of health in association with the University of Toronto or with other persons;

"(d) to accept donations, gifts, legacies and bequests for use in promoting the objects of and carrying on the work of the corporation."

I'm very pleased that patient care is there first and foremost as the object of the corporation. I think those of us who have had reason to experience the care at Princess Margaret Hospital or at the Toronto General Hospital have no doubt about the focus of the desire of the medical staff, the other health care professionals and workers at those two institutions to make sure that patient care is of a level that all of us can look to for excellence. I have no doubt that that will happen.

I think those of us who know how important it is to consolidate expertise and to ensure that we are conducting the work that is done in facilities that are going to add to the efficiency and the effectiveness of work know that this amalgamation is a good thing. It is going to result in the maximum use of space, the maximum use of staff, the maximum use of dollars, and all of us ought to be proud of that.

I have some concerns in that when we see mergers, we do of course see changes in the human resource picture. Although the staff continuation in section 14 of this bill guarantees that each person who is a member of the medical staff of the Ontario Cancer Institute, including the Princess Margaret Hospital or the Toronto Hospital, continues as a member of the medical staff of the corporation for the term of his or her appointment, there is no such guarantee for other staff members at the hospital. I think we have seen a growing concern about the plight of health care professionals, in particular nurses, as the changes in health care have happened. I sincerely hope that the human resource plan which goes along with this amalgamation will ensure that the talents of those health care professionals, particularly nurses, are honoured and are seen to be an important function of that patient care picture.

I would say that we of course will be supporting the passage of this bill. It is indeed a unique occasion. I can only think of one other occasion on which a bill has been introduced and has gone through second and third reading all in one day. I think that those who have worked so hard for this merger should see this as a mark of the support of all parties for the work they are doing, and I hope that we will be confirmed in our faith in the new amalgamated corporation as it moves forward.

1900

The Acting Speaker: Mr Gilchrist has moved second reading of Bill 172. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? It is carried.

The Chair recognizes the member for Scarborough East.

Mr Gilchrist: I seek unanimous consent to move third reading of An Act to amalgamate the Toronto Hospital and the Ontario Cancer Institute and to amend the Cancer Act.

The Acting Speaker: Is it agreed? It is agreed.

Mr Gilchrist moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 172, An Act to amalgamate the Toronto Hospital and the Ontario Cancer Institute and to amend the Cancer Act / Loi visant à fusionner l'hôpital de Toronto et l'Institut ontarien du cancer et à modifier la Loi sur le cancer.

The Acting Speaker: Does the member have a statement?

Mr Gilchrist: Simply to reiterate the comments that have been made all around. I appreciate the support from the other two parties. The member for London Centre has in fact indicated the significance of this bill: Very rarely has a bill made first, second and third reading the same day. I thank both the other two parties for their comments.

The Acting Speaker: Mr Gilchrist has moved third reading of Bill 172, An Act to amalgamate the Toronto Hospital and the Ontario Cancer Institute and to amend the Cancer Act. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? It is carried.

Resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

FISH AND WILDLIFE
CONSERVATION ACT, 1997

LOI DE 1997
SUR LA PROTECTION DU POISSON
ET DE LA FAUNE

Resuming the adjourned debate on the motion for second reading of Bill 139, An Act to promote the conservation of fish and wildlife through the revision of the Game and Fish Act / Projet de loi 139, Loi visant à promouvoir la protection du poisson et de la faune en révisant la Loi sur la chasse et la pêche.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): The member for Sudbury East had the floor when we left off the day before, so I recognize the member.

Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East): When I was finishing up on the last day that we debated this bill, I had indicated that the final concern I wanted to raise had to do with whether or not I thought the Ministry of Natural Resources actually had the ability to enforce the legislation that it is putting forward. But before I get to that, I want to return to one section which upon review of the bill I continue to find very worrisome and have not had a good indication from the ministry as to why so much of the power authorized to the minister is permitted through this particular legislation. There are any number of sections in this bill where the minister has quite overwhelming ability and capability to either provide authorization to other individuals or to do any number of things in regulation which I just don't think are necessary.

If I can look at the particular section that I have the specific concern with, it is subsection 62(6), which reads as follows: "The minister may, in an authorization given under this act, permit for the purpose of the authorization any act or omission that would otherwise contravene this act or the regulations."

The power that is provided to the minister under this particular section is fairly wide-sweeping. You might as well not even have a bill. The minister might as well on his own in regulation determine whatever it is he wants to do or doesn't want to do, whether it's in agreement with this act or whether it isn't.

In looking at a synopsis that was done of the bill, I find that other people are concerned about that as well. There is greatly increased use of ministerial authorizations throughout the proposed act. There can be no rational explanation or excuse for providing this degree of authority in this wide myriad of situations. This approach is simply irresponsible. At the very least, ministry staff will be delegated the authority of exercising the majority of the ministerial authorizations, and this means that a great number of people will be in a position to potentially abuse the very broad powers afforded to the minister.

The related concern is not just that the minister, through the authorization, can either move things that are completely contrary to the act or opposed to the act, but the minister also has the authority to delegate the responsibility to do that to other people.

I was part of another bill brought forward by this same ministry earlier in the fall, the Aggregate Resources Act, where again in regulation the minister granted himself the ability to delegate his responsibility to any number of people, and for the purposes of that act they did not have to be ministerial staff. They could be members of the public, members of interest groups attached to the ministry. I don't think the public is interested in having that kind of responsibility passed on to members of the general public who are not accountable back to this assembly, and that's what happened under the Aggregate Resources Act. That's what I see happening under this act.

People in this province believe that resources, like fish and wildlife, like aggregates, like timber, belong to all of the people of the province and the crown must continue to have responsibility for that and jurisdiction over that, and when there is an abuse of that, be responsible and accountable as well.

I continue to be very concerned that any number of sections in this bill allow the minister sweeping powers to operate directly in contravention of the bill as it's set out, but also allows the minister to delegate that authority to other people to do the same. I see absolutely no good reason for that to happen. The minister and ministry staff should continue to be responsible for protection of resources in this province and the public should be guaranteed that the protection will remain in place and not be delegated to people outside the ministry who have no accountability back to this assembly.

My final concern is that of the ability of the ministry to actually enforce this act. I listened to the minister talk

about any number of new enforcement tools listed in the act, particularly in the area of fines, the level of those fines, and with respect to the statute of limitations, which will now be extended from six months to two years.

I think it's fine and dandy that we would have a piece of legislation that talks about new enforcement measures, but the fact of the matter is this ministry is in no position to enforce its act. This is a ministry that during 1996-97 cut its annual budget by \$90 million and reduced its staff by over 2,100 people. Many of those 2,100 people are the same people who used to be on the ground in our communities protecting fish and wildlife, protecting forests, protecting aggregate resources. They are no longer employed. They are no longer in the business of doing that. I think it's irresponsible of the ministry to put forward a bill where they try to promote increased protection, at the same time not telling the public that, due to the fact that half of the staff of MNR have been laid off, they will be unable to enforce this bill.

I understand that the government will be moving a motion here this evening to have some public hearings on Thursday morning. I look forward to those public hearings Thursday morning and the clause-by-clause Thursday afternoon because I believe that while there is general and good support for the principles of this bill, there are several groups who continue to have legitimate concerns which this assembly should address.

The ministry should look at this bill as an opportunity to put in place a very good act that will serve us well for a long period of time. I hope that the minister's staff is open to some amendments on Thursday morning so we can be guaranteed that the legislation we put in place will be good and serve the purpose for a long time to come.

The Acting Speaker: Comments and questions?

Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton North): Throughout the debate on Bill 139 I'm pleased to see that there's a fair degree of consensus from across the floor, from the opposition and the third party. I'm also pleased to suggest that the bill will proceed to committee and it will have a half-day of public hearings and a half-day of clause-by-clause discussion. It has lots of all-party support for that process.

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The Acting Speaker: Comments and questions?

The member for Sudbury East has two minutes to respond.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): I was waiting for the Liberals to get up.

The Acting Speaker: I'm sorry. No one got up, and so the member for Sudbury East has two minutes to respond.

Mr Bisson: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would ask for unanimous consent to allow the rotation to continue on questions or comments.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Cochrane South requests unanimous consent. Agreed? It's agreed.

Mr Bisson: Here I am trying to help my colleague and he doesn't get up.

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member for Cochrane South.

Mr Bisson: Sometimes you lead these fights and you find out you're alone.

I want to take this opportunity to comment on the member for Sudbury East and the work that she has put into understanding this bill. I just want for the record to clarify that there has been a lot of work done on this particular issue over the past number of years. Our government, as you know, had introduced a bill to the House, and unfortunately with the election coming on, as it will come on for you, we never got an opportunity to get to second reading on the bill.

I want to say about the member for Sudbury East as well that she always does a lot of work in looking at the detail of a bill. I thought she did a really good job of getting up and taking a look at the various aspects of the bill as they apply to the issues that we are trying to deal with. However, I want a bit of clarification from the member for Sudbury East, and that is to go through again technically so that we understand the powers that the minister is taking for himself through this bill. I'm getting more and more concerned as I look at legislation go through this House that ministers fairly often tend to put clauses into the bills that give them powers to do all kinds of things outside of the norm.

I understand as a legislator that it's normal to give ministers the power to do regulation, but if I understood what the member for Sudbury East had to say, what the minister is doing by way of this bill is not only giving himself power to enact and to design regulations around this bill but is going far past what is normally accepted practice when it comes to drafting bills and when it comes to the ability of the minister to deal with what's going on with regulation. It almost sounds as if the minister is taking power to be able to supersede legislation in this case. I'd like to have those clarifications.

The Acting Speaker: Comments and questions? The Chair recognizes the member for Thunder Bay.

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William): Fort William, Mr Speaker, at least until the next election.

The Acting Speaker: My apologies.

Mrs McLeod: I was a little bit surprised to hear the member for Halton North comment on all-party agreement on the bill going forward, which I suspect will be seen to be true, at least on second reading. We're all glad to see that after literally many years of discussion of this Game and Fish Act and the need for amendments, the need for updating the Game and Fish Act, the government is bringing this forward. But when the member for Halton North speaks about all-party agreement, I think he should recognize that the reason there is some degree of consensus finally, after all these years, is that some of the major areas in which there was no consensus over a 15- to 20-year period have simply been left out of the bill. The government has chosen not to address them rather than trying to resolve those issues.

I think, for example, of one of the very contentious issues that I know of as a former Minister of Natural Resources, and I'm sure the member for Algoma will identify with this as another former Minister of Natural

Resources: the whole issue about commercial farming of deer, for example, and the concern about the importation of species which are not native to the area, how that might potentially conflict with farming, but which is clearly from an agricultural perspective something which people would like to get into to diversify our agricultural base. That whole issue has simply not been addressed in this bill. It has been set aside.

The whole area of fish farming — I think that's another area, the aqua industry, which has become an increasingly significant part of our economic development — again raises a number of questions in relationship to the conservation of our fishery resources, recreational fishing as well as commercial fishing, apart from fish farming. The whole question of the conflict and some of the concerns that have been raised by the aqua industry about this bill are simply unaddressed. That's why we need to go to committee.

I guess the other thing that surprised me in the comments of the member for Halton North is saying we only have half a day. I don't know how those long-standing controversies can be resolved in half a day of committee hearings.

The Acting Speaker: Comments and questions? The Chair recognizes the member for Sudbury East, who has two minutes to respond.

Ms Martel: I would like to thank the members for Halton North, Cochrane South and Fort William for participating in the debate. Very briefly with respect to each, if I might:

With respect to the member for Halton North, I am pleased to see that the government has agreed to some hearings on this. They will be limited, but by the same token there has been general widespread support, so I would hope the ministry staff who will be in attendance will be prepared to accept some amendments, particularly with respect to fish farmers, because they have raised the most concerns, and that we can use this as a really good opportunity for a good piece of legislation.

Secondly, to the member for Cochrane South, I still have a very specific concern which has not been dealt with. It has to do with the quite extraordinary powers of the Minister of Natural Resources under the bill. If I go back to the specific section, under subsection 62(6) it says, "The minister may, in an authorization given under this act, permit for the purpose of the authorization any act or omission that would otherwise contravene this act or its regulations."

So the minister has the power to agree with the act or not, to agree with the regulations or not, to step outside and be actually quite contradictory to everything that appears in the bill we're trying to bring forward here tonight. Not only can the minister do all that, but the minister can also assign authorization to other people to do the same. As I said in my remarks earlier, I do not believe the public gets any comfort from knowing that the minister, with such sweeping powers in the bill, can then turn around and allow that authorization to continue to extend to people who are outside of the ministry. There is

no accountability in that respect, there is no protection for the natural resources of the province, and I think people should be extremely concerned about the magnitude, the very sweeping powers that we're granting, and the minister's ability to do that.

One final comment: Again I raise with the ministry that I remain very concerned that despite the support for this act, we will not be in a position to enforce this bill in this province because of the huge cuts to MNR staff done completely by this government.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Chudleigh: I'm going to make just one brief comment on the point the member for Sudbury East raises regarding the ministerial authorizations. This is a very similar situation to that —

Mr Bisson: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I seem to remember the member having debated at second reading this particular bill. Has he already debated?

The Acting Speaker: Not according to our records, no.

Mr Chudleigh: No, I haven't. I've done two-minute hits on it, but I haven't debated.

The Acting Speaker: That is not a point of order. The Chair recognizes the member for Halton North.

Mr Chudleigh: This is not a point of order, but it's a very brief comment. This new section 6 is very similar to section 52 in the current act, and it deals in a clarified way with the way in which a lot of those authorizations are applied currently. It allows scientists to go in and take samples. It allows academics to go in and take samples in certain cases and in certain locations. That was the purpose of that clause being rewritten that way. If indeed there is clarity to it, we'd be glad to talk about those clarities in committee on Thursday.

The Acting Speaker: Comments and questions?

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): I'd like to take up on a point that was made a little bit earlier. It deals with the fact that we all know that within the Ministry of Natural Resources there have been a tremendous number of budget cuts, and about 20% of the conservation officers throughout Ontario, in my understanding, have been relieved of their duties. Within the MNR offices in many localities —

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The Acting Speaker: I hate to interrupt, but you do realize that your questions and comments are confined to the member's debate in front of you?

Mr Gerretsen: My questions and comments surely can relate to the bill itself, a bill that has taken many years and many different governments to actually bring to fruition. As has already been pointed out, the more controversial aspects of the issues that relate to the matters raised in this bill aren't even in this bill.

Surely, Mr Speaker, you will agree with me that it is somewhat — I don't want to say "hypocritical" because I know I cannot say that, but it is somewhat unrealistic for a government to bring a bill like this forward, yet at the same time get rid of 20% of the conservation officers throughout the province and also get rid of an awful lot of

the MNR positions throughout Ontario. They've closed many of the offices in the county I'm from, the county of Frontenac. In the northern part of the county, many people rely on the services that are available through the Ministry of Natural Resources, and they are no longer available. Offices are being closed and positions are being eliminated, all because of the tremendous budget cuts that have taken place within the ministry.

It may be all right to pass this kind of bill, but if we're not going to enforce it, we really haven't done anybody any favours at all. I say to the ministry representative, be sure to do the work and do it properly with the manpower you need to do the job.

The Acting Speaker: The member's time has expired. Comments and questions?

Mr Len Wood (Cochrane North): I just wanted to briefly point out that this government can bring forth all kinds of legislation, but in the case of the MNR they don't have the manpower to enforce any rules and regulations or new fines or whatever. As the member for Sudbury East pointed out, they've cut close to \$100 million out of the MNR and they've fired over 2,000 employees. The last count we have is 2,100 employees that they have eliminated from MNR.

This is a piece of legislation that we don't have any problem supporting, because of the amendments we're going to be dealing with on Thursday morning, but when you're talking about what they've gone through over the last two and a half years with the reductions and the closing of offices, the firing of staff — it's not only the MNR, but the MNR is the one that got hit the hardest in northern Ontario. A lot of the communities depended on these employees, their families, the volunteer work they were doing in the communities. They've taken all the control and brought it down to Mike Harris's office. Now you've got a Minister of Natural Resources from Mississauga, Mr Snobelen. He's going to bring all the control down to Toronto and probably close more offices as a result.

We can have all kinds of legislation, but when you've got nobody to enforce the rules and regulations, what happens to our game and fish and all the wildlife that's out there when they start decimating the offices that were scattered all throughout Ontario?

The Acting Speaker: I hardly know how to do this without it sounding like a lecture, but in this House we debate and then we have comments and questions, and those comments and questions are supposed to relate to the debate of the speaker prior.

Mr Tom Froese (St Catharines-Brock): Right on, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Order.

If a person wants to make general comments about a bill, that is properly done with his turn in debate. That is arranged usually with your House leader.

Mr Bisson: We can keep debating all night if you want.

The Acting Speaker: Order, or you may not be here all night.

What I'm suggesting is that that kind of debate is done with your turn at debate. That is arranged by your leader.

Mr Gerretsen: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: According to our rules, after the first opening speech has been given by each party — according to the rules 60 minutes is allowed for that — each other speech may be up to 20 minutes. If a member gets up and basically makes a statement that takes 20 to 30 seconds, that member in effect leaves himself or herself open to having whatever is being said about the bill in general open to debate. That's exactly what questions and answers are all about. This member did that.

The Acting Speaker: Please take your seat. That is a point of order, but in this case I'm saying that you're completely wrong.

The Chair recognizes the member for Fort William.

Mrs McLeod: Mr Speaker, I was prepared to participate in questions and comments; I was on my feet earlier. But if you're still taking points of order, I'll defer to that.

The Acting Speaker: No, comments and questions.

Mrs McLeod: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. I had risen earlier, before your comments, to respond to the contribution of the member for Halton North to the debate, although it was a somewhat narrowly defined contribution that the member for Halton North made; it was very brief.

In respect of your ruling, what I had risen to my feet to address was the absence of participation of Conservative members in discussing the potential merits of this Fish and Game Act which is before us. It's in that context that I wanted to comment on what is not addressed in the bill. Why I think it's difficult for the Conservative members to do more than make a five-minute contribution to the debate is because this is a very small piece of the government's overall agenda as it relates to the whole area of the management of our natural resources, in particular our forestry resources, and clearly the management of our forestry resources has a direct bearing on the management of our fish and game resources.

It's very difficult for any of us to participate in this debate on the Fish and Game Act outside of the context of this government's dealing with our forestry resource. I know other members have already commented on the cuts; that will certainly be something the member for Timiskaming wants to discuss when he gets on his feet to make his contribution to this debate.

I just want to highlight a couple of things that I wish the Tory members would speak to when they have a chance to debate. That's the question of where their government is on implementation of the class environmental assessment on timber management — again, a somewhat narrow although very significant part of the forest management, but something where the government cut back on the implementation of the recommendations from that class environmental assessment on timber management by something like \$19 million, almost half the budget. So when the members talk about the inability of the ministry to enforce the current act, we also have to talk about the refusal of the ministry to even implement the recom-

mendations on timber management that came from the class environmental assessment.

I'd also like the members to talk about the Lands for Life program and where that is going and how that impacts the very management of efficient game resources.

Mr Bisson: To the member for Halton North, I listened intently to his very brief comments. The reason I raised this concern initially around the power the minister is taking is that I know, as you do, the kind of changes that the ministry has made and that your government has made to this ministry.

I refer back to Hansard, page E-948, from the debates at the committee on August 20, 1997, where the Minister of Natural Resources said, "For example, during the 1996-97 fiscal year we helped to reduce the cost and size of government by reducing the ministry's operating budget by \$89.8 million and reducing staff by 2,100 positions." That's half the staff at MNR.

Our concern, and the reason I made the comments originally, is how in heck can the MNR enforce this bill, even if we agree with it — there is all-party agreement on the bill — when you don't have people in the field to enforce what we're putting in place in this bill? That's the point we're making. When we take a look at the bill, where you're giving yourselves power — and it might very well be power that was in the previous act; I'll have to go back and check that — the point is, it's sort of a weasel clause to allow the minister to say: "This act is not going to apply to me. I don't have to do what's in this act because, quite frankly, I haven't got the staff to enforce it in the first place."

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That's why we raise this particular issue. We think the bill goes in the right direction. There's all-party agreement for a good part of what's in this bill, but when we see sections like that in the bill and we couple that with the kinds of cuts you've made at MNR, where you've taken 50% of the staff away, you know, I know and, more important, the public of Ontario knows the MNR is not going to be in any position to enforce this act. That's why we raise the question of the ministerial powers.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Halton North has two minutes to respond.

Mr Chudleigh: No comment.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming): I am pleased to be able to speak on this bill. It has been mentioned previously by the member for Fort William that this bill was started years and years ago and had revisions over the last two governments in order to reach some sort of consensus on some of the less contentious issues contained in the fish and game debate.

As the member for Fort William has stated, the most contentious issues have not been dealt with in this bill. They really need to be, and I would encourage the government to do further study and further consultation on key areas that I think would really help economic activity in the province as a whole, and especially northern Ontario, and that would be in the whole area of aquaculture and

domestic farming of wildlife species such as the European domestic deer.

These are areas that, yes, are highly controversial because wildlife officials feel that if some of these domestic animals escape, there could be a detrimental impact upon our native species. That is certainly a valid concern and really would have to be addressed. If such authorization were to go ahead in northern Ontario for this expansion of agricultural activity, very strict requirements would have to be put in place and strictly adhered to in order to safeguard our natural resources in northern Ontario. There are two areas for sure that have not been touched upon that really have to be dealt with.

But I mentioned in earlier debate, just as, I guess, a friendly heckle across the way to the government members, what a difference a week makes. What I was referring to is the highly contentious issues the government, of course, was bringing before the House last week with the education amendment act and with municipal download.

The big difference between those areas and this week is that this is an act that has had a lot of consultation with all the different people who are out there, who have varying points of views on this, but it has been widely consulted. Maybe it has been consulted for too long. I'm not saying you need to consult over a period of a couple of governments, but the idea is that you bring in, when you've got contentious issues, all the various interest groups and really start to consult with those people on the most important issues that pertain to the subject matter.

People should understand that this is quite a large bill, maybe not quite as large as the bill we dealt with last week in Bill 160, but we're still talking about a 60-page act here that deals with all sorts of regulations in regard to the management of wildlife and hunting. It goes on from general restrictions of hunting and dealing with species to protecting nests and eggs and also protecting dens and beaver dams. It really goes beyond the protection that we used to have in our Fish and Game Act in the past, really brings it up to the modern day. I think internally what most people would say is that a lot of this is housekeeping. It is renewing an act that protects our wildlife in Ontario and brings it up to the standards and quality that we would consider today.

Safety in methods: It refers to things like unsafe areas for hunting and hunter clothing and the careless use of firearms and new penalties for that, which is very important, bringing that up to today; ways that I suppose in the old days we used to accept in hunting animals, such as that you could shoot a bear while it was swimming. This would be prohibited in this bill, which is right. It talks about birds of prey and hunting with dogs and all the different aspects of dealing with wildlife in Ontario and bringing this up to the modern day, and this is very important.

We have an act before us today that all three parties accept. We understand, as our predecessors did in this House many years ago who first brought in the Game and Fish Act, that it is of paramount importance to our environment and to our economy to protect all our wildlife

species. We have more sensitivity to the importance of that, both for the environment and our economy today, with the great help of the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters, who have worked very closely with all three parties in the House and this government in bringing this forward.

They have contributed tremendous amounts of energy and good ideas about how to protect the natural resources. They understand that while for the environment it's important to protect our natural resources, it's also very important to protect our natural resources because of the tremendous recreational opportunity that fish and game present to the people of Ontario and to visitors whom we allow to harvest wildlife in our province. They are very important and the anglers and hunters respect that.

One of the things this act does is add to the protected list different species in this province. It is very important that we continually take a look at the strengths and weaknesses of certain species and make sure we update our endangered species list from time to time to ensure we are doing the very best to protect our endangered species. Unfortunately, we tend to have to add species from time to time. I wish it was going the other way and we were able to take species off the list, but sad to say that is not the case.

Not only are more species added to the list, but greater protections are put on in more specific ways to protect certain species. One example of that is that there are greater protections granted to black bears in this act. For instance, the possession of black bear gall bladders separate from the carcass is now prohibited. This is to prevent the poaching of black bears solely for parts such as gall bladders that are highly sought after in certain parts of this world, so we prevent the wholesale slaughter of those animals just for certain parts and the rest of that animal is wasted. It also will be illegal to interfere with bears in their dens in any way and that is an important change in this. As I mentioned earlier, bears are no longer even to be hunted while they are swimming.

In most species there are new protections put forward that should protect our wildlife species in the province. To enforce that there are new, stiffer penalties, longer periods of potential incarceration and greater amounts of fines, to bring them up into the modern day. In fact commercial penalties under the act are increased up to \$100,000 or imprisonment up to two years. There are some very stiff penalties that are now being brought forward into this act to protect our wildlife. The prohibition of possession of animals that were legally taken from another jurisdiction is now there, so even if you cross the Ontario border and can show that you may have procured these carcasses in another jurisdiction, that still would be illegal in Ontario and our MNR enforcement officers could act.

As mentioned earlier, there are some very good increased protections in this act for our wildlife that we all agree with. The big concern that many of us have is the lack of enforcement ability of our Ministry of Natural Resources because of the sustained cuts that this ministry has taken. In fact, this ministry on a per capita basis has

sustained more cuts than any other ministry in the government. Forty-three per cent of the workforce of MNR has been let go. That's 2,170 positions and that is a very great concern.

The previous minister had promised us that the enforcement officers of natural resources who are charged with the responsibility of protecting our wildlife would not be touched, but we understand that there are up to 20% fewer conservation officers out there. I would say to the government it is important that we keep our person power resources in the ministry for sure in conservation efforts. If the word were to get out to people that there is a lack of enforcement of this new bill that provides better enforcement for all concerned with our wildlife, we would be putting our wildlife in jeopardy, and that is something in Ontario we do not want to do.

It's very important that we make sure we protect our wildlife and make sure we have proper enforcement. I think the proper penalties are here and the proper enforcement mechanisms are here. That's important. We have to make sure now that we have the ability to carry them out. I see the parliamentary assistant is paying very close attention and I'm very pleased about that and hope he'll pass that on to the minister.

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There are some other concerns I want to bring up. With these 2,170 positions that have been reduced in the Ministry of Natural Resources, as a northerner who comes from a big riding in northeastern Ontario and soon by the next election to be much, much larger, there has been a significant economic impact on our region, on northern Ontario as a whole especially, with this loss of 2,170 people. This is a region with 10% of the population of Ontario and the vast majority of these 2,170 people coming from the north. These people have been very well paid, have good benefits and have a tremendous economic impact on our communities.

Every time the government announces these layoffs I try to explain to the business community in our towns and villages, many of whom are supportive of obviously a greater private sector as I am, if that's what we could do, to have a greater contribution by the private sector of the economy and maybe not so great by the public sector. When you make these moves so quickly in northern Ontario, a region of the province that is so dependent whether you like that or not on these public sector jobs, it has a severe impact on our economy. It's our main streets that get hurt and it's our professionals who get hurt, because, as I've said, many of these people have great benefits and so they've got the plans to be able to go to the dentist and the optometrist. So everybody in our community, from the smallest business person right up to all our professionals, gets hurt.

It has a snowball effect on our economy and I ask that the government take a second look at a cost-benefit study, the economic impact that you have when you do this downloading in northern Ontario. It has a horrendous impact and we're starting to feel that now from the previous downloading and reducing of the size of the

bureaucracy in the north. This will be exacerbated after the passage of Bill 160. Starting next September, we will see the loss of another group of professionals, teachers, across northern Ontario. Again, it's going to have a compounding impact on our economy when those people with good salaries and wages leave our communities to seek jobs elsewhere. That is going to really hurt the north, so I ask the government to take a look at that.

It's important to point out that while the government's philosophy is that if there's somehow less public sector involvement in the economy it will allow an opportunity for the private sector to expand, that correlation doesn't necessarily happen in the north. When you have a fairly closed economy that is by and large dependent upon resource-extractive industries, that correlation of, say, getting rid of some government jobs doesn't necessarily mean, and it sure hasn't meant and I'm sure it won't mean, an expansion of private sector jobs.

In fact, right now is unfortunately a very sad example that with the international price of gold dropping well below US\$300, we are seeing miners being laid off, mines being shut down. There are private sector jobs, but while the public sector is diminishing those jobs are also diminishing. Northern Ontario right now is being hit, if you will, by a double whammy. We are in a low cycle of commodity demand, so the price of copper is down, nickel is down. That affects all of northern Ontario. As I've mentioned, gold is down. We're not getting in the north the private sector picking up as I know the government thinks and hopes it will and it does to some degree in southern Ontario.

You have to take a look at northern Ontario before you make those cuts, because we are so dependent on the natural resources. It's always been the thinking actually, I think of all governments up until now in this province, that there was an understanding that the public sector work by ministries like the MNR, the Ministry of Northern Development and all the other industries that are there to support the people in northern Ontario, form an underpinning to the economy that really helps us weather the cyclical swings of the boom-and-bust cycle that we have in northern Ontario. But as you start to drastically reduce the number of people who participate in public sector jobs in the north, you leave us extremely vulnerable to those cyclical changes in our economy. As we enter this downturn of the lack of demand for raw materials, raw commodities, that we're in right now, we are becoming extremely vulnerable to severe dislocation in northern Ontario.

I will predict, and I don't like to predict this, that you are about to see an incredible downturn in the economy of northern Ontario, and it's important for this government to rethink the reduction of the jobs in the north because we cannot sustain any more, especially at this particular time of downloading.

I'd like to mention, just before I finish my remarks, the Lands for Life process that this government has embarked upon. It certainly worries me that there's a lack of public understanding about what this exercise concerns. The idea

of granting kind of a permanent tenure to the various interest groups, in a sense carving up the north and all the crown land in Ontario between the various user groups for a life tenure, is a bit disconcerting, while it's important to give some certainty to people who are in the forest industry that they've got the use of those lands for sure and they've also got the responsibility of sustainability in protecting those lands and replanting and generating.

It's very important to understand that for over 90% of the land base, it may be near impossible to try to superimpose an official plan and zoning bylaw on that region, and I think that's what Lands for Life is attempting to do. It's going to be a great challenge and I think what it's doing is again bringing everybody who is in conflict with each other to the table. I hope that it's going to be possible for this process to work and that people are fair in how they decide what is going to happen.

Mr Speaker, if you'll allow me, I wouldn't mind sharing the last few minutes, if that's okay, with the —

Interjection.

Mr Ramsay: Okay. I understand it's all right, Mr Speaker, that we're going to do a second rotation. That's fine. I will take my time and speak to the end.

I would say to the government that while they are going to get support for this bill, I believe from all three parties, we've got to address these other contentious issues. I know the parliamentary assistant has a good interest in agriculture, as I do, and I think it's important that we find some sort of balance — I will state my position on this — so that we do not deprive our agricultural industry of expanding into these new niche markets that are out there.

In fact, it is the trend in the world that as we lessen our dependency on wild or natural resources, we find domestic ways to produce food, protein sources, etc. Aquaculture is a prime example of that where the nations, our nation included, that have shoreline on the oceans have started to take great advantage and have invested many dollars in research and development in finding new ways of growing protein in the oceans.

I think we have to make sure that we who have a vast freshwater resource explore to the utmost safe and sustainable ways of growing protein in our freshwater resources and also that we look at our tremendous land base across Ontario that is not suitable for all commodities and that we are able to free our agricultural industry to exploit to the very best and most sustainable way those commodities that are best suited for that particular land base. I think that might include some of these domesticated breeds of formerly wild animals that have come from other jurisdictions. The spotted European deer that you see in different restaurants is a very popular commodity and something we could farm. It would take some of the pressure off our wild species.

I would encourage the government to look at that. I think you'd get a lot of encouragement in this House to find some compromise on that and to allow some of that to go forward. I think that's very important. If I may, I'd enter that as a challenge to the government, to the parliamentary assistant and to the new minister. We've

come this far on Bill 139, and there are still some other challenges ahead. We should move ahead, and I think you'd find that you'd get a lot of cooperation from the other parties in this House.

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The Acting Speaker: Comments and questions?

Ms Martel: I'd like to reinforce some of the points made by the member for Timiskaming, two in particular. The first has to do with the enormous staff cuts that have been made at the Ministry of Natural Resources, about half the total ministry staff. That certainly puts at risk the natural resources in the province, and it makes it clear to all of us that the ability of this ministry to enforce this new act is pretty sketchy.

The real concern, though, has to do with the disproportionate hit to northern Ontario with respect to those layoffs. The member for Timiskaming was quite right to point out that in many of the communities we represent, those of us who are here from northern Ontario, that hit, both to MNR and MTO, has been very, very difficult. In a community like Temagami, for example, some 50 MNR jobs were cut in 1996. That would have represented the bulk of the employment in that particular community. It's the same again and again, community to community, right across northern Ontario. In fact, in terms of the proportion in the staff cuts in 1996, 55% of the cuts occurred in the south; 45% occurred in northern Ontario, with a little less than 10% of the overall population of the province. In terms of public sector job cuts and devastation to our communities, that has been very apparent in the part of the province we represent, northern Ontario. The government has to come to terms with how it has played that out and how it is very much responsible for the devastation in many of those communities.

With respect to fish farmers and the aquaculture industry, a topic I raised in my remarks, it is an area that had \$14 million worth of value at the farm gate in 1995. The folks would like to be considered as an agricultural activity, and they should be, because under two other ministries they already are. I hope the government is open to change when we get to committee on Thursday.

Mr Chudleigh: I appreciate the comments from the member for Timiskaming, particularly his comments about the consultation the bill has received. We received not long ago a letter from a group that asked our government to schedule Bill 139 for second reading and provide for its timely passage, a letter signed by the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters, the Federation of Ontario Naturalists, the Animal Alliance of Canada, Northern Ontario Tourist Outfitters, World Wildlife Fund and the Bear Alliance, certainly a diverse group of clientele, all supporting the bill and all asking for its timely passage.

I would also point out to the member that for some years now there have been 281 badges issued to conservation officers in the Ministry of Natural Resources. That number has remained constant and those positions are, I believe, at this time — at least they were last month, in November — completely filled, so the ability to look after the consequences of this act is in place.

You also mentioned the number of species we have under protection in Ontario and those we're putting on the special protection list, which includes: the elk, which are being reintroduced — I believe 50 head are coming in in February of this year in a reintroduction just to the south of Sudbury; the peregrine falcon, which was reintroduced into Ontario from stock that was available through the hawking clubs in Ontario and elsewhere in North America; the bald eagle, which is again being sighted in Ontario over time; and the wild turkey. The wild turkey has been reintroduced and has been so successful that it actually has a short hunting season in some areas of Ontario because of that extremely successful reintroduction.

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur): I certainly want to compliment the member for Timiskaming for his remarks, as always, wise and thoughtful with some good suggestions for the government members. I'm glad the member for Halton North was at least listening to his remarks.

It truly is ironic, when you think about this particular bill, Bill 139. It has taken a number of years to get to this particular act together, and we know now that there is potentially support from all three parties and also from a number of the organizations out there, support one really needs to have the bill go forward, but the irony simply is that there will not be the staff to do the job.

I appreciate that this has been a refrain you have heard a lot tonight, but that's because it's such an important point that needs to be made. What ultimately is the point of putting forward a piece of legislation which we agree will improve the process, will make for a better Game and Fish Act, if the manpower, the person power, the staff is not there to be able to look after it?

Talking further about the impact that problem has on the north, we've made the point more than once that over 2,000 jobs within the Ministry of Natural Resources have been lost in the last two years, and 20% of the conservation officers, despite the fact that the government said they wouldn't do it, have also faded away, at the very least.

The fact is that the 2,000 MNR jobs reflect one fifth of all the cuts made in that particular grab. There were 10,000 jobs cut from the Ontario civil service, and 2,000 came from the Ministry of Natural Resources, so a full one fifth, with a very large percentage of those coming from northern Ontario. Many of us as northern members talk and will talk in the future about the impact these cuts have had on the economy in northern Ontario and on the way northern Ontario people are able to do their jobs.

I want to compliment the member for Timiskaming and look forward to another opportunity to speak.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I want to rise to comment on the comments of the member for Timiskaming. I was provoked into doing this because I was in my office working and watching the TV, and the member for Halton North got up and repeated one of those silly briefing notes that members of this Legislature are given by members of the ministry who think they're giving it to

someone who knows nothing and therefore will be able to get it by them.

He said that there are 281 conservation officers' badges and that hasn't changed. That's quite true. But the thing he doesn't know, or at least if he does he isn't telling us, is that half those people may be sitting behind desks in Toronto. They aren't in the field. The COs are not out in the field doing the job because of the cuts this ministry has experienced. To say that there are 281 conservation officers' badges now, as there were last year, is to ignore the fact that many people who are in positions other than conservation officers in the field hold CO badges in the Ministry of Natural Resources. As a matter of fact, some of them have been transferred to other ministries.

The fact is that there are fewer people in the field. There have been enormous cuts in the Ministry of Natural Resources. They have decimated many offices in my riding and across other parts of northern Ontario. The fact is simple: the Ministry of Natural Resources does not have the staff to do the job any more. They have been cut by 40% to 45% and they do not have the staff to do the job. To pass new regulations is fine, but if they can't be enforced it's very hollow.

I guess the member for Halton North has been treated like a mushroom, as bureaucrats are wont to do with politicians from time to time: You keep them in the dark, and I won't say what he's been fed.

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The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member for Timiskaming for two minutes to respond.

Mr Ramsay: I'm pleased that my remarks provoked comment from all around the House. I'm glad the member for Algoma called the member for Halton North on his figures, because my anecdotal evidence is that I just don't see the conservation officer around as much. I live out in the country, with a river in the back and a river in the front, so there's lots for the MNR conservation officers to watch over, but they're just not around as much out there protecting our wildlife. It's not their fault. Their numbers have been diminished, their working hours have been diminished. They are important.

The other loss that happens within the ministry is that you lose what I like to call the institutional memory of the ministry. The ministry becomes a repository for all the knowledge and expertise that has developed over the years, and when you cut 45% of its employees, you really cut a lot of the expertise, knowledge and experience those experts had in the field, in this case of wildlife management, forestry management and the protection of our aquatic reserves in Ontario. That's very important, and we're losing that expertise in the north. We're losing that from our communities. That's going to be very hard to replenish.

Also, when you look at the civil service, it is very hard to find people under the age of 35 years now. We're not renewing. It's very important that we get on to renewing our civil service, so we make sure we develop a new repository of knowledge, that we invigorate and rejuvenate our civil service. That's very important for this ministry.

The Acting Speaker: The member's time has expired. Further debate?

Mrs McLeod: Since it seems there is no one for the third party or for the government left to participate in this debate, it falls again to the turn of the Liberal caucus to participate in what I think is an important bill, certainly in terms of its effect on resource management in northern Ontario. It's with pleasure that I have an opportunity, as a northerner, to participate in this debate.

I was very pleased that my colleague, the member for Timiskaming, focused in his remarks on the bill on the importance of resource management issues to northern Ontario. He talked about the fact that the northern Ontario economy is still very resource-based. In fact, given our geography, the reality is that the northern Ontario economies are going to continue to be resource-based into the foreseeable future. That's why the resource management issues are important to us. That's why each of us, as northerners, welcomes an opportunity to participate in one of the few debates we're going to have in the House on resource management, because this is one of the few bills which the government is likely to bring forward that deals with at least one segment of the many important issues of resource management that have such an incredibly important effect on northern Ontario economies.

There's another reason I'm quite pleased, maybe intrigued, to be participating in the debate tonight, and that's because this bill stands in the name of Mr Snobelen, who of course has recently come to the post as Minister of Natural Resources. There's an intriguing fact in that for me, because I am the education critic for our caucus and have just finished dealing with Mr Snobelen's bill that was brought forward when he was education minister, the now infamous Bill 160. Mr Snobelen switched posts to become Minister of Natural Resources before that particular bill was passed, leaving us in a situation where Mr Snobelen will no longer be there to be held accountable for the damage being inflicted on the educational system that will continue to be inflicted on the educational system because of his previous bill.

That leads me to the comments he made in introducing the revision of the Game and Fish Act, Bill 139, which we're debating tonight. I was wondering whether the minister, prior to giving his public address on the revision of the Game and Fish Act, had made his "create a crisis" speech in the Ministry of Natural Resources, as he did when he became Minister of Education, or brought forward his change management approach. His change management approach of course is one in which, by preference, you bankrupt a system so that you can bring about change. But I know that when the minister came into the Ministry of Natural Resources, the system had already been bankrupted, so that particular approach to change is not going to work in the Ministry of Natural Resources.

My colleagues have addressed the issue of the cuts that have been brought about by the Harris government to the Ministry of Natural Resources. If you want to talk about bankrupting a system, look at the cuts that take 22% of the budget away from a ministry which is so fundamentally

responsible for the management of so many resource issues in this province. My colleagues have talked about the impact of that 22% cut on staff cuts. As my colleague from Timiskaming has said, those staff cuts have fallen primarily in northern Ontario and have been devastating to the economies of northern Ontario just in the job losses. Over 2,000 people, 43%, of the Ministry of Natural Resources have lost their jobs because of the budget cuts brought in by this government.

It's not that those jobs were unneeded. It wasn't that there had been an analysis done by the previous Minister of Natural Resources or by anybody in the Harris government in terms of what kind of staffing and dollars were needed to ensure that there would be effective resource management through the Ministry of Natural Resources. It was just a straight budget cut; it was a big ministry, so a big ministry could take that kind of hit. So we saw a reduction of 43% in the staff of the Ministry of Natural Resources.

It was devastating for northern Ontario economies, where those staff cuts were felt disproportionately, but also devastating for the management of our natural resources. It is in that context that Bill 139, the Game and Fish Act, is brought forward. It's being brought forward into a system, a natural resources ministry, which is expected to monitor and to enforce the new act when they do not have the personnel left to carry out effective enforcement. That too is an issue which a number of my colleagues have already raised.

There is an irony in this bill, which will be welcomed, as the member for Halton North has said, by many of the groups who have wanted to see changes and amendments to the Game and Fish Act brought forward for many years. There's not one of us in this House who has served as a Minister of Natural Resources who hasn't attempted to reach the kind of consensus on many of these controversial issues that would allow this act to be brought forward. It's with a measure of pleasure that many of the constituent groups see this act brought forward today, but there is an irony in a bill that presents new powers of enforcement, new penalties for any violation of the rules and regulations, when there are very few people left to enforce even this act.

The member for Algoma, who is himself a former Minister of Natural Resources, corrected the member for Halton North when the member for Halton North said there has been no reduction in conservation officers. I think there was a reduction contemplated. I think somebody reminded the government that it had promised that there would be no reduction in the number of conservation officers. Indeed, as the member for Algoma says, the number of conservation officer badges has remained constant, but those conservation officers to a very large extent are sitting behind desks doing administrative work. Anybody who knows about the work of conservation officers knows that you cannot enforce the regulations around hunting and fishing, cannot enforce the gaming laws of this province, if you're sitting behind a desk doing administrative work.

I'm not surprised that this bill now allows two years instead of six months for prosecutions of offences under the Game and Fish Act, because I think there is going to be such a backlog in prosecutions that it is indeed going to take two years rather than six months to bring about any kind of enforcement at all.

Nevertheless, I'm one of the people who is pleased to see the bill coming forward. I'm pleased that it is going to go for second reading, and there may even be some reason to be optimistic that it may come back for third reading, but we do have some period for public consultation. Brief as it is, half a day, there'll be some period for public consultation. I think we have to recognize that one of the reasons the government has been able to bring the Game and Fish Act forward to this point is that it has simply refused to deal with some of those controversial issues which prevented previous ministers and indeed previous governments from reaching consensus that would allow us to bring forward a thorough review in amending the Game and Fish Act.

We've already touched this evening on a number of those areas. We've touched on the issue of the farming, for domestic purposes, of wildlife species. I well remember from my days as the Minister of Natural Resources some very real concerns, obviously an important agricultural opportunity in the domestic farming of wildlife species, but some very real concerns about the importation of species not native to Ontario, how the importation of species not native to Ontario for farming purposes may potentially conflict with the conservation of native wildlife and in fact with our ban on the commercial use of native wildlife. Those are questions which people struggle to find reasonable answers to and which this government has simply not dealt with in presenting the Game and Fish Act tonight.

My colleagues have touched on the aquaculture industry, a growing industry, the fish-farming industry, one which I think has considerable economic potential for development in this province, yet some very real concerns have been expressed about the changes to the Game and Fish Act on the part of the aquaculture industry. It's important that those concerns be heard. It's important that they be responded to so that industry can grow in Ontario without coming into conflict with either our recreational fisheries or with our commercial fisheries. But these questions are not going to be addressed in half a day's public hearings. Those are just two of the controversial issues very specifically related to amendments to the Game and Fish Act, controversial issues which previous ministers and governments have attempted to deal with and which this government has felt it should just ignore in bringing forward this act at this point.

2010

I turn back to the Minister of Natural Resources and his comments in introducing Bill 139, the revision of the Game and Fish Act, because I found it interesting that he wanted to cite some important acts, some positive acts, that have been carried out by the Harris government as they relate to the Ministry of Natural Resources. One of

the issues he addressed in making his opening comments on this bill was that the fishing and hunting revenues from wildlife licences are going to be targeted directly into the fish and wildlife programs. I think that's positive. It's hardly a new idea, because the first fund that was targeted within general revenues was in fact the fisheries licence money, which was targeted by the Liberal government, I believe in 1986, to go into fisheries renewal and fisheries conservation. Ten years later, it's still a good idea but it's hardly a new idea.

The minister also quoted the Fish and Wildlife Advisory Board which was put in place in 1996; again, I'm sure, a valuable addition to the management of our resources. It's to advise on the use of that targeted fund that the government has put in place. I think that idea may be almost as good as the idea of the community fisheries advisory bodies, which for some time have asked to have some of that targeted money allocated directly to the community advisory bodies so that the community advisory bodies could deal with the fisheries conservation and renewal in their own communities.

I'm still a believer that the people who know best how to manage the particular resource in their own area are the people who form those community advisory bodies. I trust that the Fish and Wildlife Advisory Board is not going to become a centralized bureau which makes all these decisions in lieu of the work that can be done by local advisory bodies dealing with local conditions, because obviously resource management has to be varied from one area to another.

I do want to stress the fact that bringing forward Bill 139, the Game and Fish act, particularly with some of the very key areas which are not addressed by the act, but even the positive parts that are advanced in bringing forward some amendments, is not going to make up for the damage that has been done by the Harris government to natural resources.

I point to the fact, and it was strangely missing from the minister's comments in presenting Bill 139 and summarizing the positive things which the Harris government has done for natural resources — I notice he mentioned the fact that in 1996, Ontario earned an F from the World Wildlife Fund for its failure to protect our ecologically significant areas. I contrast that to Alberta, which in 1996 got a B. The Harris government likes to compare itself to and take its leadership from Alberta. Perhaps it could look to Alberta in the area of protection of ecologically significant areas. I certainly am not going to contrast that to 1989, when Ontario rated an A for its efforts in protecting ecologically significant areas.

I'm sure that if the minister had seen fit to comment on that F, he would also have wanted to go on and say, "We have learned from that. We have taken some positive steps and we are addressing some of the concerns we have about ecologically significant areas, or at least some of the areas that earned us our F on the last report card," and that they have identified some additional areas for preservation through the parks system.

If he had seen fit to address that and to say that this is one of the positive steps the Harris government has taken in the last little while, I would certainly have wanted to ask him about the funding that is there to ensure that the parks in Ontario are well managed. I'd have been interested in having an opportunity to discuss the government's plans for our parks system and whether or not it is still the plan, which was put forward by Mr Hodgson when he was the Minister of Natural Resources, that our parks would have to be put on a pay-as-you-go system and that if any park didn't break even, it would then have to be closed or privatized. Of course, as a result of that policy we have indeed seen some closures of some of our parks. It's ironic that a government can talk about making some steps forward on the basis of preservation of ecologically significant parklands on one hand at the same time that it is forcing the closure or the outright privatization of many of our parklands on the other hand.

I would have been interested in having an opportunity to talk with the minister in public hearings about how the preservation of ecologically significant parklands has an effect on our ability to ensure the conservation of our game and fish species. Obviously, these issues are related. That's the frustration that those of us who are really concerned about resource management have in dealing with Bill 139, the Game and Fish act, in isolation from any discussion of this government's initiatives or lack of initiatives or giant steps backwards in so many other areas of resource management.

I would have liked to have an opportunity to talk about crown lands. Lands for Life was mentioned by my colleague from Timiskaming, and I know it was mentioned by my colleague from Algoma-Manitoulin in his original speech on second reading of this bill. Lands for Life causes some concerns for northerners. Lands for Life is looking at how you can take the crown lands, which as my colleague from Algoma-Manitoulin said are about 45% of the land mass of this province — I don't know if members opposite who don't have an opportunity to travel widely across northern Ontario understand how massive this area is or how significant it is both ecologically and also to the economy of northern Ontario. We're talking about 45% of the land mass of the entire province, clearly a significant portion of the land mass of northern Ontario. The Lands for Life program is looking at how you can divide up that land and turn over, if not the ownership, at least the management of that land mass.

It is a logical question to ask, "How can you talk about the Game and Fish Act and the conservation of certain species if you're not prepared to talk about Lands for Life, if you're not prepared to talk about the management of crown land, if you're not prepared to talk about the overall management of our forests?" Surely you can't talk about conservation of one small part of our resource, as important as it is, outside of the context of the management of our overall natural resources.

I would like to have an opportunity to talk to this government about the class environmental assessment on timber management. Again, timber management is one

part, a very large part, of the management of our forest resources. I happen to have been the minister who launched the class environmental assessment on timber management. There would be a lot of people who might want to say, "Would you go back and do it differently?" I don't know. It was a lengthy process, it was a costly process, and at the end of the day it did deal with timber management and not overall forest management. I think all of us would recognize that even with the cost and the time the class environmental assessment took, that was a limitation, we weren't dealing with the full range of forestry issues.

Nevertheless, a lot of the forest management issues were discussed. There was considerable consideration of the issues related to timber management: the wildlife conservation issues, the fisheries issues, the tourism issues. There were a number of recommendations that came from that class environmental assessment on timber management. It should have been useful. It would be much more useful for conservation if the government hadn't cut \$19 million out of the budget that was put in place in order to implement the recommendations that came from the class environmental assessment.

You've got to ask, is this government that brings forward Bill 139, the Game and Fish Act revisions, and says, "This is one of our positive steps," really serious about conservation and the management of our resources when they cut the budget for the implementation of the environmental assessment in half so that there is not a chance that it can begin to take the positive steps forward that came from that timber management environmental assessment?

I can see that time is running out, and I only wish that in the half-day of hearings there was going to be an opportunity to address some of the very specific game and fish issues that have not been addressed by Bill 139, let alone issues like the Lands for Life program or the class environmental assessment and timber management or all the issues related to the management of our natural resources, our parkland as well as our fisheries and our wildlife.

2020

I think it's fair to come back to the issue of budget and staff cuts and the lack of resources not only to enforce Bill 139, the Game and Fish act, but to do the ongoing monitoring of our natural resources that allows conservation to be truly effective. I don't think it is possible — in fact, I know it's not possible — to provide adequate management of our forestry resource if you don't have the resources to do ongoing audits.

Mr Wildman: That's right.

Mrs McLeod: The member for Algoma will know how challenging it is to come up with accurate audits of our forestry resources for timber purposes. I don't see that kind of ongoing audit being carried forward. You cannot manage the wildlife resource, which is what the Game and Fish Act is all about, in part, if you're not doing ongoing audits of our wildlife population, an area in which there is constant controversy and debate about whether or not we

are doing an adequate job today. With the cutbacks in staff resources and budgeting, it is impossible to do a real, ongoing audit assessment of our wildlife population.

Then there's the whole question of the assessment of our fisheries. How can you have fisheries conservation if you're not doing an adequate assessment of the fisheries resource?

I know how inadequate our efforts have been seen to be in the past. I've talked to people in fisheries who have said, "Unless you have somebody actually out in the boat on the water, you cannot know whether or not you're getting an accurate assessment of your fisheries resource." You can't do it sitting behind a desk. You can't do it by number-crunching in Queen's Park. You can't do it with theories. You've got to have people out there in the field, working with other people who are in the field, who have an understanding of how you actually do the assessment. Once you've done the assessment, then you can put in place the steps that are needed in order to conserve the resource.

I don't think there are adequate resources for enforcement. I don't think there are adequate resources in place to deal with the assessment. I don't think there are adequate resources in place for this government to have any idea of what has to be done in order to preserve and conserve the natural resources that are so critical to this province: important, I stress again, as my colleagues have, from an ecological perspective but also important from an economic perspective to forestry, to tourism and to the sustainable development of our province.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs Marion Boyd): Questions and comments?

Mr Wildman: I want to commend my friend from Fort William on her remarks and I want to home in on the issue of how hollow it is to pass legislation like this unless we have the staff to do the ongoing audits and to do the enforcement.

I'll just give you an example of to what abysmal depths the Ministry of Natural Resources has fallen. Earlier this spring I had on my deck at my home a yearling bear cub. I called the Ministry of Natural Resources, because in the past the Ministry of Natural Resources would come and they would put out a live trap and they'd trap the bear and then they'd transport it way off into the wilderness so that it would not be a nuisance to the human population.

I was informed by the Ministry of Natural Resources that they don't have the staff to do that any more. I asked them, "What should I do?" They said, "Well, you could shoot it." I didn't particularly want to shoot a yearling, and for that matter I pointed out to them that if someone were to shoot the bear and only wound it, the neighbourhood would have a worse problem on its hands than simply leaving the bear as it was.

Then the ministry staff said, "You could call the OPP and they might come and shoot it." Of course, this would really be high on the priorities of the Ontario Provincial Police. Then they said, "Of course, if you don't want to do that or you don't think that will work, you could hire a private contractor who might come and trap the bear." I

said, "All right, but do you have any idea how much that would cost?" They said, "No, we don't." I said, "This will not just benefit me as a homeowner and protect my family, it will protect the whole neighbourhood, so shouldn't the whole neighbourhood contribute to the cost?" They said, "Yes, but that's up to you to figure that out."

I point out that we've already paid the cost in our taxes, and the ministry can't do the job.

Mr Chudleigh: I'd like to thank the member for Fort Frances for her comments. Again she pointed out the widespread support this bill does have and the number of people who are affected by the Ministry of Natural Resources and their bill in this province.

I pointed out again the aquaculture industry in Ontario, which has great potential in this province and is the subject of ongoing consultations with the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Hopefully in the very near future our province will begin to see the benefits of that industry and its growth.

I also pointed out that in 1989 the World Wildlife Fund I think gave Ontario an A for its handling, and in 1996 that had fallen to an F. I believe that last spring, in April 1997, they had given the Ministry of Natural Resources a C+. We're halfway back to the A that I'm sure everyone will agree we deserve for the richness of our wildlife and the respect with which we hold it.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur): Certainly I want to compliment the member for Fort William and correct the member for Halton North. He misnamed the member's riding. It's Fort William, not Fort Frances.

Mr Wildman: Halton North.

Mr Gravelle: Halton North. My apologies. I didn't mean to misname yours, but I guess I was so upset about your misnaming the member for Fort William's, I wanted to get going.

As always, her remarks were well thought out and managed to bring in some points that I don't think had been brought out in this discussion of Bill 139. It think it is the point that this bill itself really cannot be brought in simply in the isolation in which it has.

The fact is, the Lands for Life process which is going on across this province is going to have an enormous impact on the whole use of our crown land. The fact that crown land is such a large proportion of the land mass of our province, it needs to be understood better by the government members.

Another problem with the Lands for Life process is that there is a very tight time frame that the former minister set in terms of a report coming down. I would hope that the new minister might be more flexible in that regard. Certainly a lot of meetings have taken place and there's been an effort by the people who are running the process to try to inform the public, and it has been an interesting process to follow it. But the impact is going to be so enormous that I think it's incredibly important that the government members know more about it. The minister himself actually discussed this in the Legislature.

There's a variety of other aspects of our whole land mass use that are going on but again are not being discussed. In fact, there is a national conservation authority being set up, being discussed, in terms of changing the whole parks system in our own region up near Thunder Bay and up through Lake Nipigon. This is something else that a lot of people are very concerned about and there's a great need to discuss it. The Minister of Natural Resources is involved in this process, although he has made absolutely no comment about it publicly. That needs to be discussed as well.

Ms Martel: The member for Fort William rightly pointed out that during the debate on this bill, especially on the government side, there was absolutely no relationship between this particular bill and how it deals with conservation and management of an important resource in the Lands for Life process.

I suspect that was done purposely. My view on the Lands for Life process is that at the end of the day, although the government has three round tables out and a number of people who are trying to do some good work with respect to very controversial land issues and how resources will be allocated, it will end up being the government which will allocate those resources. The time frame for the Lands for Life process is so short that at the end of the day, the members on the panels are going to end up bowing to the demands and the direction and the determination of the Ministry of Natural Resources because dealing with very controversial land use issues cannot be done in a matter of months, as the government wishes to happen.

So why there is no mention with respect to this bill and the issues raised here and the process is because the government will in the end make the final decision. Some people will do a whole lot of work, very good work. They will put a lot of time and a lot of effort into it, but by default, because of a lack of time to resolve some very difficult issues about how to allocate fish and wildlife, how to allocate timber, how to allocate remote tourism, for example, those folks will not be able to do that work. The government at the end of the day, the ministry bureaucrats, will be the ones who will provide that direction, and the government will move forward. I think that's a shame because some people are doing some very good work, but at the end of the day they won't be able to resolve the issue.

One final point with respect to the aquaculture industry. It is true that OMAFRA is working with this industry to try to promote it. They give the industry \$1 million a year. The problem is, the Ministry of Natural Resources, even in this bill, doesn't recognize aquaculture as a farming activity. We are calling on the government to in fact do that, to protect their interests and to protect this industry and to promote it through this bill as well.

2030

The Acting Speaker: The member for Fort William has two minutes to respond.

Mrs McLeod: I'd like to thank my colleagues from Algoma-Manitoulin, Halton North, Port Arthur and

Sudbury East for their comments. I appreciate the member for Port Arthur correcting the fact that I am the member for Fort William and not Fort Frances.

Mr Wildman: Aw, it's somewhere up there.

Mrs McLeod: There's always a certain sense among northerners, some might say almost a paranoia, that nobody knows where we actually come from.

But I think the real frustration that we tend to express as northerners is that not many people understand how important these issues of resource management are to us and how important they are to our economy.

I noted that the member for Halton North acknowledged that they had moved from an F to a C+. I suggested that had the minister spoken to this, he would have made some comment about the fact that they have taken some steps forward in addressing the issue of parkland and the preservation of more ecologically significant lands through setting aside more park reserves.

That's why I would like an opportunity to talk about whether or not there's actually going to be management of those parklands or whether or not they're going to continue with an earlier policy of saying that if a park can't pay for itself, it's going to be closed down or privatized. It seems to me that this is something the World Wildlife Fund would be very concerned about, and if we see the impact of that policy, I think we will well be back to an F before very long. That worries me as a northerner, because our parks are an important part of our tourism potential as well as an important part of our ecological preservation. I think it's so important that we have comprehensive policy that addresses all of the issues of resource management.

In my last 30 seconds, I want to address one that is so important to us as northerners and plead with this government to address it more fully, and that's the issue of fire management. We have seen significant cuts in fire management, a \$4-million cut, the closure of firefighting bases. We saw a situation last spring where they couldn't get a training program for new people to come and fight fires going in time and they couldn't bring back the people who had been severed because that would interfere with their severance agreements, so we went without the capacity to fight forest fires. You cannot manage our resources — I mean, it might be that moose habitat thrives in a burned-out area, but it's not the policy of the government to create the burned-out areas to protect our moose population. You've got to deal with that as one of many important resource issues.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Seeing none, Mr Snobelen has moved Bill 139, the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act. Is it the pleasure of this House that the motion carry? Carried.

Shall the bill be ordered for third reading?

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean): I suggest that it be moved to the standing committee on general government.

The Acting Speaker: Agreed? Agreed.

Hon Charles Harnick (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): I seek unanimous

consent to move a motion with respect to committee consideration of Bill 139.

Interjections: Agreed.

Hon Mr Harnick: I move that Bill 139, An Act to promote the conservation of fish and wildlife through the revision of the Game and Fish Act, be considered by the standing committee on general government for one day only at its regularly scheduled meeting times on Thursday, December 11, 1997, and that the committee be authorized to meet beyond its normal adjournment time to complete clause-by-clause consideration of the bill on that day.

The Acting Speaker: Agreed? Agreed.

RED TAPE REDUCTION ACT
(MINISTRY OF NORTHERN
DEVELOPMENT AND MINES), 1997

LOI DE 1997 VISANT À RÉDUIRE
LES FORMALITÉS ADMINISTRATIVES
AU MINISTÈRE DU DÉVELOPPEMENT
DU NORD ET DES MINES

Mr Spina, on behalf of Mr Hodgson, moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 120, An Act to reduce red tape by amending the Mining Act / Projet de loi 120, Loi visant à réduire les formalités administratives au ministère du Développement du Nord et des Mines.

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton North): I'm pleased to say a few words about Bill 120, which is the red tape reduction act of the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines.

Bill 120 proposes amendments to the Mining Act to improve the business climate for Ontario's mining industry by standardizing mining claims, by clarifying definitions and by simplifying mining fees. I would add that this particular act is one of a series of red tape acts that we have been attempting to get cleared through the House to try to achieve the objectives of this government of simplifying the government processes and trying to reach objectives of creating more jobs in this province.

This legislation would also protect environmentally sensitive areas during claim-staking, and in doing so it reflects our continued commitment to protect the environment.

This bill further reduces red tape, which will allow for improved customer service and reduced administrative costs for both the taxpayers and the mining industry. The mining industry in Ontario generates between \$4 billion and \$7 billion of new wealth annually and employs about 72,000 Ontarians.

Some of the elements of the bill that we are looking at accomplishing here include, firstly, that the bill amends the definition of "minerals" to include precious minerals such as diamonds. What that is does is harmonize Ontario's Mining Act with the growing interest in diamond exploration in the north.

Second, we're eliminating the requirement to stake out and record placer mining claims. That removes the

expense and the confusion that this particular requirement has caused in the past.

Third, we are allowing the director of mine rehabilitation to allow alternatives to prescribed methods of mine rehabilitation if, and only if, environmental standards are met or exceeded.

Fourth, the Lieutenant Governor is being authorized to prescribe special environmentally sensitive guidelines for mineral staking to address specific environmental concerns in certain parts of this province.

Finally, the Minister of Northern Development and Mines is being authorized to set the amount of mining fees to avoid the cost, time and effort of developing new regulations each time fees are changed.

To give evidence of the importance of the need for this bill to proceed as quickly as possible, in particular to have second and third readings accomplished as soon as possible, I'd like to read a couple of paragraphs from some letters that were sent to the minister by a couple of very important individuals in the industry. The first is from Mr John Heslop, the president of the Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada, dated December 4, just this past week. Mr Heslop says:

"In order that clarity and certainty can be created, we ask that Bill 120 now take priority so that it can move forward to royal assent.

"The explorationists active in the Temagami area need your support so that special regulations can be finalized which will allow environmentally responsible exploration work to be undertaken in this sensitive area.

"We would also urge the quick passage of Bill 68, which has been stalled at second reading....

"In general, we support actions which will simplify government and, at the same time, improve efficiency for the mining industry."

The second letter is from Wayne Adair, who is the reeve of Temagami township, and it also has gone to Minister Hodgson. It was dated November 25, and again I take excerpts from the letter in the interests of time:

"I am very concerned that Bill 120 seems to be stalled. It is a very important piece of legislation that has direct implications not only for Temagami but for most of northern Ontario. I am speaking primarily about the sections of Bill 120 dealing with amendments to the Mining Act that will provide the mechanism to allow for staking in sensitive areas.

"Some of the richest mineralization sites here are currently under a staking prohibition order. Our area only needs the legislative okay to amend the Mining Act. I know you are familiar with our land use dilemma over the years in the Temagami region. It was under your watch that the lifting of the cautions in most of Temagami occurred, thus sparking a significant staking rush. The final steps in the process are the enacting of Bill 120, the creation of special regulations for exploration in sensitive areas and the formal adoption of the Temagami comprehensive land use plan.

"Bill 120 not only promotes extra protective measures for exploration in the Temagami region, but it also gives

the Lands for Life round table the necessary flexibility for making recommendations on staking in sensitive areas throughout Ontario. Without this ability, the round table will be pressured to leave sensitive lands out of the land base altogether.

"If the same percentage of the land base is taken out of northern Ontario that has been taken out of the Temagami region it will mean the decimation of the resource industry as we know it.

"For the Lands for Life process for northern Ontario and for the Temagami region, the timely passing of this legislation is essential."

That's Wayne Adair, the reeve of Temagami township.
2040

It is clear that it is important that this legislation go through. There are some concerns, and we understand and appreciate the concerns that have been expressed by the opposition members, and I'm sure we will hear some of them in a few moments. However, we want to stress that it is critical that we are able to get this through as soon as we possibly can, so that we can accomplish good economic development.

These changes will go a long way to stimulating jobs and prosperity in the communities in northern Ontario that constantly depend on a thriving mining industry, and we would hate that the holdup of this bill would further delay any prosperity economically that can be realized by these communities, in particular in places like Temagami.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs Marion Boyd): Questions and comments?

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich): I am pleased to participate in this Bill 120 discussion tonight. I'm always curious and anxious to speak to the bills that the government puts out as red tape bills or the illusion by government to show the world that they are in fact cutting red tape. To this end, I decided to look at exactly what they had done so far.

We remember very clearly during the election campaign what the government said they were going to do and in fact what they have done, and one area that is specifically important to, say, employers is the WCB. What we realized when they talked about the streamlining of the system, knowing there needed to be reforms in the WCB, what they did immediately was cut the premiums. They took 5% off what individuals were going to be receiving, so those injured workers ended up paying for what the government continues to call the streamlining of the WCB system, as an example, more elimination of red tape.

Let's see what they said in their Common Sense Revolution: that this premium being cut by 5% will save Ontario employers an estimated \$98.5 million. What we got the other day off our fax machine is interesting; you would think this was a Liberal publication. It's entitled "1998 WCB Rate Shocker." I know this is of interest to the former parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Labour. This is the COCA bulletin, and COCA stands for the Council of Ontario Construction Associations. When Ontario is in a booming economy and doing quite well, the

construction industry likewise is doing very well, and aren't they paying for it too? I was very surprised to see this come through from COCA, which you would assume would be thanking the government for their streamlining of the WCB. What they've done instead was say, "Despite projected savings following implementation of Bill 99 and ever-decreasing accident rates in the construction industry, the WCB hammered the industry with massive increases to 1998 assessment rates."

Mr Spina: On a point of order, Madam Speaker: This is a debate on Bill 120. We're off in WCB — land here and red tape. I'm not sure where she is.

The Acting Speaker: That is a point of order. I would remind the member for Windsor-Sandwich to confine her comments to the bill that's being discussed.

Mrs Papatello: The relevancy for all of the Conservative members — I understand that you don't want to hear about all these other areas of supposed streamlining, supposed changes the government is bringing into the system to help Ontario move and be bountiful.

What we're finding time and time again, despite Bill 120 and what it may or may not do, we understand that Bill 120 deals with mines. We understand that it's the government's attempt to allow the minister to set new fees. We spoke with a lawyer in Windsor the other day and he said, "Has anyone taken a look at the new fees in the court system these days?" These all came through, these various bills on streamlining. They've calculated — and not the cost for the lawyer, as you know — the cost ultimately for the business people out there, a 300% increase that this one firm calculated because of new user fees in the court system. Who's paying for that? You and I, the business people, the business community.

What does the Mining Act do, Bill 120? It allows the minister to set new user fees in the mining industry. So while the mining industry may say, "Oh, look at this, we've got some streamlining in the system, we're going to be doing better business here," I caution the mining industry to have a good look at what the minister is now allowed to do once Bill 120 is passed. It allows the minister to set new fees, and in my view that's like that little hostage in the bill. You don't see it and you really want to get it out but you can't. There are going to be allowances of new fees.

Just like lawyers who operate around Ontario have now discovered, after months of all of this new fee allowance in the court system — they've gone through another year to look at what those fees are — they're calculating massive increases in the cost of doing business. This WCB rate shocker is one more example where the government promised to streamline the system, just like you promised in your red tape bills. Where you said you were going to cut costs in your Common Sense Revolution, what they got instead was hammered by this government.

I find it shocking because this was the gang that was supposed to be good for business. This was the gang that was supposed to reduce your costs. They purport to bring forward red tape bills, like this mining bill, supposedly to

cut red tape, but what we get in the end is more user fees in the business community. Ultimately, they either transfer those costs down to the consumers like you and me or they absorb those costs and it results in less profit for that company at the end of the year. When the members want to know why we would talk about other streamlining that isn't really streamlining, is in fact more cost to the system, that's exactly why.

I have to read just a brief paragraph of an editorial that was done about the government. What was more surprising is that it came from Canadian Business magazine. Again, I find it astounding. This is the gang that was supposed to be good for business, but what we're seeing now after two and a half years, you're at your mid-point, I think the bloom is off the rose here with this gang. "Lots of common sense," it says, "no common decency."

The reason I point out this particular editor's note by Arthur Johnson at Canadian Business magazine is because he speaks specifically about what they've just done to Jack Geller, a 67-year-old widely respected securities lawyer, named a Queen's counsel by a previous Conservative government of Ontario, on and on, who served as acting chair of the Ontario Securities Commission, which plays a critical role in ensuring fairness and confidence in Canada's capital market. But on October 20 Geller suddenly announced that he would be stepping down because Ontario Finance Minister Ernie Eves did not want him running the agency.

I would ask all members of the House — I know you probably get this mag in your own office — to just read the editorial note, because it's quite interesting. It refers to the article in the magazine, "Front and Centre," with a picture of the minister, Ernie Eves. What they talk about here is the poor treatment that Jack Geller received at the hands of Eves and when we ask why, it says: "Inside Tory headquarters Geller's outburst obviously set off an alarm. Within two weeks he was reappointed, but the muddle persists."

What they found at the Ontario Securities Commission — and now we're talking about regulation. Don't forget, a government bent on streamlining, supposedly, with the introduction of bills such as 120 on the Mining Act. This one talks about regulation of the securities industry.

"Just last month, for example, 23 fund dealers were audited by the OSC. The results were less than exemplary. About 25% of the dealers investigated were commingling investors' money with their own instead of keeping the funds in separate trust accounts. Also, more companies cared little about how their staff operate, turning a blind eye when dealers steered clients into unsuitable investments. These are hardly the actions worthy of an industry that wants to police itself."

It goes on in the article to suggest, "Canadian investors can only hope that Eves is merely trying to save face and is not bowing to pressure from the mutual fund lobby. For, without responsible regulation, how are fund investors ever to know whether they are getting a fair shake or a shakedown?"

I find it very ironic that you would think once again a government that is supposed to be there for business and there for the people, protecting industries worthy of protection, regulations where regulation is truly needed, now we see Eves all over the map where this Jack Geller is concerned, an individual quite well known in the industry, who has frankly been manhandled by the minister.

"In the 38 years of my practice of law, I've never been treated like this," he told the *Toronto Star*. Geller also alleged that Eves had been influenced by those in the mutual fund industry who resented his attempts to regulate their operations more closely.

2050

How very interesting. Why are we not talking about that kind of regulation? Where it's required in an industry that deals with billions upon billions of dollars, consumer protection, why aren't we talking about those kinds of regulations in this House? Because, I would submit, those aren't the kinds of things we want to talk about in the House.

For Minister of Finance Ernie Eves, this is the last thing he wants to see come up on the House, that there is actually some suspicion around what he is doing in his selection of who may eventually be the chair of the Ontario Securities Commission. These are the kinds of regulations I would like to see being handled properly. It seems we had someone who was prepared to do that job and you're finding a very clever way to move him out of that position.

I would suggest that we may be discussing Bill 120 and the Mining Act, but what it's about is the introduction of new user fees, which is new cost to business. The business community, as we see all over the place — rate shockers to business — their costs are going up and you're not going to get away with it.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East): I am pleased to join the debate here this evening. I have been provoked by the comments that were made by the parliamentary assistant. We had a discussion about this earlier, and it is true that while we have concerns about the bill, we will at the end of the day probably end up supporting it. But I am provoked because of the repeated reference, at least four or five if not six times, that we need to proceed with this bill as soon as possible. He went on to read into the record letters from two sources to reinforce why this bill has to be done as soon as possible, and why, he said, if we are concerned about the economic prosperity of communities, we would get on with the business of dealing with this right away.

I have to make this point. This bill was introduced on February 3, 1997. Some 10 months later, at five to 9 on the night of December 8, the government has finally decided that Bill 120 is a priority. I know my good friend from Brampton North, the parliamentary assistant, has had to come in here tonight and deliver the speech on behalf of the Minister of Northern Development and Mines, so without doubt he is a little bit embarrassed about having

that contradiction pointed out. I don't blame him because he was given a speech to read and he came in and he did that. But for goodness' sake, it is worth pointing out to the members of the assembly and to the public what other pieces of legislation were so important that the government had to deal with those before they dealt with this one.

Let me just list a few of them for the edification of my colleague from Brampton North. What was the priority in the last 10 months for this government? If people look back, they will recognize that we sat for almost all of that time, except from the period between the end of June and mid-August and then again from the middle of October to the middle of November, but during the rest of that time we sat. What was a priority for the government were things like Bill 99, which cut benefits from injured workers; rent control, which effectively ended rent control in this province; Bill 152, which allows the download of not only new services but a whole host of associated costs on to any number of communities, the same communities that I assume my colleague from Brampton North is so worried about with respect to economic prosperity.

The government had a big priority around the cuts to education through Bill 160. The megacity legislation was a priority. Bill 106 and the son of Bill 106, Bill 147, which will lead to increased local property taxes both for residential homeowners and for any number of businesses, that was a priority for the government.

I have to say to my colleague, even though he repeated it four or five times tonight, this bill hasn't been a priority for the government. It was introduced by the Minister of Northern Development and Mines on February 3 and we haven't seen hide nor hair of it since and we haven't heard anything about it until last week it mysteriously appeared on the agenda of the government House leader when he wanted it through as soon as possible. There has been no end of pressure to have this thing dealt with, second, third reading, the whole nine yards, as soon as we can and before we leave this place next week. But please, don't try and tell the good folks that this was a priority. It hasn't been for 10 months.

While it might lead to some new development opportunities in some communities, in northern Ontario in particular, that have good mineral potential, the fact of the matter is, if you want to talk about economic prosperity and the impact on communities, you'd better look at everything else the government is doing, because, if anything, the impact in those communities, especially in northern Ontario, is going to be very negative, from the download legislation all the way through.

With respect to the bill itself, we support the bill but we have asked the Minister of Northern Development and the PA tonight to deal with a specific amendment which would give us a whole lot more comfort about the intent of the bill than we get now in reading through it.

The intention of the bill that was described to me by ministerial staff, whom I trust, is that the purpose is to deal with claim staking in a different way. Right now under the Mining Act mining claims can only be staked in

one way. What the bill purports to do is to allow for a new mechanism that would allow for special rules in special areas in the province so that staking can occur in those areas. Those areas will be environmentally sensitive. The aim of the act as described to me was to provide a new mechanism for the Minister of Northern Development and Mines to develop regulations to permit claim staking in sensitive areas across the province.

I agree with that aim and with that purpose. Right now we know that staking occurs under the Mining Act. The rules are set under that act with respect to exploration. The rules around that, particularly in sensitive areas, are dealt with under the Public Lands Act. The Ministry of Natural Resources has a specific mechanism now to deal with sensitive areas. But under the Mining Act and through the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines, there is no similar mechanism to use to develop those special rules.

I don't have a problem with what the intent of the act is as it has been described to me. The reference point that was given to me was to allow for claim staking in a particularly sensitive area in Temagami. I know a little bit about this issue because our government spent a great deal of time in two areas: to try and find a settlement over a couple of years with the first nations and other communities with respect to land use in Temagami. We were also responsible for continuing in place the comprehensive planning council which was established very specifically to deal with a new land use plan in Temagami so that the various interests with respect to people who want to protect the environment, people who have a tourism interest, people who wanted logging to occur, people who wanted claim staking and mining to occur could all be represented and we could come up with a particular plan for a sensitive area, an area that has been the source of controversy for some 20 years now, and hopefully find some agreement to adopt it to allow for some development to occur, but to protect those areas that also needed to be protected.

When I was told that the purpose of the bill was to deal with Temagami in particular and very specifically the skyline reserve, to open that up for staking, I went back to the recommendations from the comprehensive planning council. The council, in its report to the government dated April 10, 1996, said the following:

"One of the key issues that council sought to resolve is mineral management in the skyline reserve of Lake Temagami. The reserve contains a number of sensitive values that require protection. At the same time, there are areas within the reserve that have been assessed as having significant mineral potential, and council believes that there are sufficient planning and regulatory mechanisms in place to warrant maintaining this area as part of the mineral management land base.

"A special management area prescription has been prepared for Lake Temagami which specifies the conditions under which mineral exploration would occur. Council recognizes that there is also a need for a structure to address potential conflicts between mining-related activities and other values beyond Lake Temagami."

2100

The council members issued a very specific recommendation to this government, recommendation 22, which reads as follows:

"Council recommends that the special management area prescription prepared for management area 39" — and that is the skyline reserve on Lake Temagami — "which appears in the supporting documentation be adopted. Council also recommends that the ministries of Natural Resources and Northern Development and Mines work to identify additional significant tourism and recreational values and develop appropriate mitigative measures for mining-related activities in relation to these values."

The impression I was left with after dealing with ministry staff was that the whole thrust around Bill 120 was indeed to deal with the adoption of recommendation 22 as per the report that had been presented to this government in April 1996 by the comprehensive planning council and that clearly, through the mechanism in Bill 120, we would be in a position to develop a special set of rules for staking in that area and get on with that business.

The problem I see, and it is a problem I have conveyed to both the parliamentary assistant and to the minister's staff, is that the actual wording in Bill 120 doesn't reference Temagami at all or the reserve or anything about the community or anything about the comprehensive planning council report or recommendation 22. The bill nowhere, in any way, shape or form, references the intent of the government to use the legislation to put in special rules to protect sensitive areas. That doesn't appear anywhere.

While the staff has certainly said to me, "This is what the bill purports to do," the actual wording in the bill is far too vague and far too broad to give me any comfort that at a certain point in time this same minister or another minister could not abuse his or her privileges and put in place a set of rules that would not protect the environment but would degrade environmentally sensitive areas.

I think it's important to read the relevant amendment so you can understand just how open-ended and unclear it is. It says, in an amendment under section 5:

"(2.2) A regulation made under subsection (1) or (2) may be general or particular in application, may be limited as to the time or place or both and may provide that it applies only to the area or areas designated by the minister."

As I read that, it does not indicate in any way, shape or form any intention of the ministry to protect special areas. There is no indication that the purpose is to develop some special rules for staking in these environmentally sensitive areas, much as MNR has done under the Public Lands Act for other portions of mining. There is no indication at all that the government is going to take some special care in these areas. It's not referenced in the bill. I am not comfortable with the very broad interpretation that could come which could lead a minister or ministry staff to do just the opposite. A minister or ministry staff could use this same section, not to protect sensitive areas, not to ensure special rules for staking in those areas, but to

lessen some of the standards we have around staking and do harm in environmentally sensitive areas.

I think there is a way around this. In a section of the bill just above the subsection I just read, the ministry puts in a mechanism to ensure that there will be at least the same protection in place in the Mining Act now, or additional protection. In a section already dealt with by my colleague from Brampton North when he spoke about additional responsibilities of the director of mine rehabilitation, some of those protections apply, specifically under subsection 5(2), paragraph 13. Under this section, which deals with mine closures, it says: "authorizing a person specified in the regulations to exempt a proponent from complying with any standard, procedure or requirement in a regulation respecting closure plans if the specified person determines that the closure plan meets or exceeds the objectives of the provision." So the director of mine rehabilitation will be in a position to make decisions about closure plans and how they will be adopted if he or she believes that the plan, as presented by the mining company, meets or exceeds the provision.

I have asked the ministry staff to give me some additional guarantee by way of further amendment to this act to clarify what it is that the government intends to do. I have no doubt, since I have heard it from very reliable staff, that what they want to do is to be sure that there are special rules for claim staking in sensitive areas. I support that, but the bill does not provide for that in its current wording. I am extremely reluctant to proceed to provide any additional support on third reading without having that intent clarified, without having that protection in place.

What we have said very clearly to the government is that we are prepared to proceed with this on second reading tonight, and we will deal with second reading and finish with it. We are also prepared, before the House ends, given that it is such a priority for this government — although it hasn't been for the last 10 months — if the government can come up with the appropriate wording that will mitigate some of my fears, to deal with this in committee of the whole and third reading before this session ends.

I hope the government can go away now and deal with the legal drafters and come back with a provision that will do that, make it clear what the intent is and make it clear that the same minister at another time or a different minister cannot abuse this particular section by putting in place rules which will not protect but will in fact destroy or impact negatively other sensitive areas when it comes to claim staking. I hope the government can do that.

We appreciate the opportunity to debate here this evening. We look forward to getting a draft of a new amendment or amendments which will deal with the particular concerns I have. If we can get that and be comfortable with it, I give an undertaking on behalf of our party that we will go ahead, pass it at committee of the

whole, pass it at third reading before the House recesses next week.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Comments and questions?

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I'd like to congratulate my friend from Sudbury East for her presentation with regard to the Mining Act. I would refer the government House leader to the need to get some clarification about protection as the aim of this bill and its relationship with a protected area such as the horizon zones in Temagami. This is a very important issue and one we must get some clarity on.

I hope arrangements can be made for amendment to the bill in such a way that it will allow us to proceed to third reading as soon as possible. If the minister had been present this evening — and I'm not being critical of him for not being — we might have been able to do it tonight. But since he isn't here, we need to get an amendment that makes clear the purpose of the act and how it will ensure protection of areas.

If that happens, I'm sure the bill can pass third reading prior to the Christmas break, keeping in mind that as of now the Christmas break begins after this Thursday, because we do not have any new House calendar motion before the House that has been passed. Of course, the problem with a House calendar motion giving us more time to pass this bill, Bill 120, is that there is no limit on the debate on the House calendar motion; we could debate for a week in order to sit for a week. That really wouldn't benefit anyone, the opposition or government.

We're at a point that requires cooperation among the House leaders. I'm trying to be cooperative in suggesting this move on Bill 120. I hope we can make some accommodation with regard to other priorities of the government.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments? Further debate?

Mr Spina has moved second reading of Bill 120. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members; there will be a five-minute bell.

I have received a request from the chief government whip: "Pursuant to standing order 28(h), I would like to request that the vote on Bill 120 be deferred until Tuesday, December 9, 1997." According to the standing orders, that will be done.

Hon Charles Harnick (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): Mr Speaker, I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? It is carried.

This House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 2112.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon / L'hon Hilary M. Weston

Speaker / Président: Hon / L'hon Chris Stockwell

Clerk / Greffier: Claude L. DesRosiers

Clerk Assistant / Greffière adjointe: Deborah Deller

Clerks at the Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Algoma	Wildman, Bud (ND)	Halton North / -Nord	Chudleigh, Ted (PC)
Algoma-Manitoulin	Brown, Michael A. (L)	Hamilton Centre / -Centre	Christopherson, David (ND)
Beaches-Woodbine	Lankin, Frances (ND)	Hamilton East / -Est	Agostino, Dominic (L)
Brampton North / -Nord	Spina, Joseph (PC)	Hamilton Mountain	Pettit, Trevor (PC)
Brampton South / -Sud	Clement, Hon / L'hon Tony (PC) Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports	Hamilton West / -Ouest	Ross, Lillian (PC)
Brant-Haldimand	Preston, Peter L. (PC)	Hastings-Peterborough	Danford, Harry (PC)
Brantford	Johnson, Ron (PC)	High Park-Swansea	Shea, Derwyn (PC)
Bruce	Fisher, Barbara (PC)	Huron	Johns, Helen (PC)
Burlington South / -Sud	Jackson, Hon / L'hon Cameron (PC) Minister without Portfolio (seniors issues) / ministre sans portefeuille (Affaires des personnes âgées)	Kenora	Miclash, Frank (L)
Cambridge	Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Kingston and The Islands / Kingston et Les Îles	Gerretsen, John (L)
Carleton	Sterling, Hon / L'hon Norman W. (PC) Minister of the Environment, government House leader / ministre de l'Environnement, leader parlementaire du gouvernement	Kitchener	Wettlaufer, Wayne (PC)
Carleton East / -Est	Morin, Gilles E. (L)	Kitchener-Wilmot	Leadston, Gary L. (PC)
Chatham-Kent	Carroll, Jack (PC)	Lake Nipigon / Lac-Nipigon	Pouliot, Gilles (ND)
Cochrane North / -Nord	Wood, Len (ND)	Lambton	Beaubien, Marcel (PC)
Cochrane South / -Sud	Bisson, Gilles (ND)	Lanark-Renfrew	Jordan, W. Leo (PC)
Cornwall	Cleary, John C. (L)	Lawrence	Cordiano, Joseph (L)
Don Mills	Johnson, Hon / L'hon David (PC) Minister of Education and Training / ministre de l'Éducation et de la Formation	Leeds-Grenville	Runciman, Hon / L'hon Robert W. (PC) Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services / solliciteur général et ministre des Services correctionnels
Dovercourt	Silipo, Tony (ND)	Lincoln	Sheehan, Frank (PC)
Downsview	Castrilli, Annamarie (L)	London Centre / -Centre	Boyd, Marion (ND)
Dufferin-Peel	Tilson, David (PC)	London North / -Nord	Cunningham, Hon / L'hon Dianne (PC) Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for women's issues / ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales, ministre déléguee à la Condition féminine
Durham Centre / -Centre	Flaherty, Hon / L'hon Jim (PC) Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail	London South / -Sud	Wood, Bob (PC)
Durham East / -Est	O'Toole, John R. (PC)	Markham	Tsubouchi, Hon / L'hon David H. (PC) Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations / ministre de la Consommation et du Commerce
Durham West / -Ouest	Ecker, Hon / L'hon Janet (PC) Minister of Community and Social Services / ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires	Middlesex	Smith, Bruce (PC)
Durham-York	Munro, Julia (PC)	Mississauga East / -Est	DeFaria, Carl (PC)
Eglinton	Saunderson, William (PC)	Mississauga North / -Nord	Snobelen, Hon / L'hon John (PC) Minister of Natural Resources / ministre des Richesses naturelles
Elgin	North, Peter (Ind)	Mississauga South / -Sud	Marland, Hon / L'hon Margaret (PC) Minister without Portfolio (children's issues) / ministre sans portefeuille (enfance)
Essex-Kent	Hoy, Pat (L)	Mississauga West / -Ouest	Sampson, Hon / L'hon Rob (PC) Minister without Portfolio (privatization) / ministre sans portefeuille (privatisation)
Essex South / -Sud	Crozier, Bruce (L)	Muskoka-Georgian Bay / Muskoka-Baie-Georgienne	Grimmett, Bill (PC)
Etobicoke-Humber	Ford, Douglas B. (PC)	Nepean	Baird, John R. (PC)
Etobicoke-Lakeshore	Kells, Morley (PC)	Niagara Falls	Maves, Bart (PC)
Etobicoke-Rexdale	Hastings, John (PC)	Niagara South / -Sud	Hudak, Tim (PC)
Etobicoke West / -Ouest	Stockwell, Hon / L'hon Chris (PC) Speaker / Président	Nickel Belt	Laughren, Floyd (ND)
Fort William	McLeod, Lyn (L)		
Fort York	Marchese, Rosario (ND)		
Frontenac-Addington	Vankoughnet, Bill (PC)		
Grey-Owen Sound	Murdoch, Bill (PC)		
Guelph	Elliott, Brenda (PC)		
Halton Centre / -Centre	Young, Terence H. (PC)		

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Nipissing	Harris, Hon / L'hon Michael D. (PC) Premier and President of the Executive Council / premier ministre et président du Conseil exécutif	Sarnia	Boushy, Dave (PC)
Norfolk	Barrett, Toby (PC)	Sault Ste Marie / Sault-Sainte-Marie	Martin, Tony (ND)
Northumberland	Galt, Doug (PC)	Scarborough-Agincourt	Phillips, Gerry (L)
Oakville South / -Sud	Carr, Gary (PC)	Scarborough Centre / -Centre	Newman, Dan (PC)
Oakwood	Colle, Mike (L)	Scarborough East / -Est	Gilchrist, Steve (PC)
Oriole	Caplan, David (L)	Scarborough-Ellesmere	Mushinski, Marilyn (PC)
Oshawa	Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Scarborough North / -Nord	Curling, Alvin (L)
Ottawa Centre / -Centre	Patten, Richard (L)	Scarborough West / -Ouest	Brown, Jim (PC)
Ottawa East / -Est	Grandmaître, Bernard (L)	Simcoe Centre / -Centre	Tascona, Joseph N. (PC)
Ottawa-Rideau	Guzzo, Garry J. (PC)	Simcoe East / -Est	McLean, Allan K. (PC)
Ottawa South / -Sud	McGuinty, Dalton (L) Leader of the Opposition / chef de l'opposition	Simcoe West / -Ouest	Wilson, Hon / L'hon Jim (PC) Minister of Energy, Science and Technology / ministre de l'Énergie, des Sciences et de la Technologie
Ottawa West / -Ouest	Cullen, Alex (L)		Bartolucci, Rick (L)
Oxford	Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Sudbury	Martel, Shelley (ND)
Parkdale	Ruprecht, Tony (L)	Sudbury East / -Est	Ramsay, David (L)
Parry Sound	Eves, Hon / L'hon Ernie L. (PC) Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance / vice-premier ministre, ministre des Finances	Timiskaming	Hodgson, Hon / L'hon Chris (PC) Minister of Northern Development and Mines, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines, président du Conseil de gestion
Perth	Johnson, Bert (PC)	Victoria-Haliburton	Witmer, Hon / L'hon Elizabeth (PC) Minister of Health / ministre de la Santé
Peterborough	Stewart, R. Gary (PC)		Kormos, Peter (ND)
Port Arthur	Gravelle, Michael (L)	Waterloo North / -Nord	Arnott, Ted (PC)
Prescott and Russell / Prescott et Russell	Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)	Welland-Thorold	Doyle, Ed (PC)
Prince Edward-Lennox- South Hastings / Prince Edward-Lennox- Hastings-Sud	Fox, Gary (PC)	Wellington	Skarica, Toni (PC)
Quinte	Rollins, E.J. Douglas (PC)	Wentworth East / -Est	Harnick, Hon / L'hon Charles (PC) Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs / procureur général, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones
Rainy River	Hampton, Howard (ND) Leader of the New Democratic Party / chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique	Wentworth North / -Nord	Kwinter, Monte (L)
Renfrew North / -Nord	Conway, Sean G. (L)	Willowdale	Lessard, Wayne (ND)
Riverdale	Churley, Marilyn (ND)		Pupatello, Sandra (L)
S-D-G & East Grenville / S-D-G et Grenville-Est	Villeneuve, Hon / L'hon Noble (PC) Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, minister responsible for francophone affairs / ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales, ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones	Wilson Heights	Duncan, Dwight (L)
St Andrew-St Patrick	Bassett, Hon / L'hon Isabel (PC) Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation / ministre des Affaires civiques, de la Culture et des Loisirs	Windsor-Riverside	Palladini, Hon / L'hon Al (PC) Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism / ministre du Développement économique, du Commerce et du Tourisme
St Catharines	Bradley, James J. (L)	Windsor-Sandwich	Parker, John L. (PC)
St Catharines-Brock	Froese, Tom (PC)	Windsor-Walkerville	Turnbull, Hon / L'hon David (PC) Minister without Portfolio / ministre sans portefeuille
St George-St David	Leach, Hon / L'hon Al (PC) Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement	York Centre / -Centre	Klees, Frank (PC)
		York East / -Est	Sergio, Mario (L)
		York Mills	Kennedy, Gerard (L)
		York-Mackenzie	
		Yorkview	
		York South / -Sud	

A list arranged by members' surnames and including all responsibilities of each member appears in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month.

Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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No. 258A

N° 258A

ISSN 1180-2987

**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

First Session, 36th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Première session, 36^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Tuesday 9 December 1997

Mardi 9 décembre 1997

Speaker
Honourable Chris Stockwell

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Président
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 9 December 1997

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 9 décembre 1997

*The House met at 1331.
Prayers.*

ESTIMATES

Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Northern Development and Mines): Mr Speaker, I have a message from the administrator of the government signed by his own hand.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): The administrator of the government transmits estimates of the certain sums required for the services of the province for the year ending March 31, 1998, and recommends them to the Legislative Assembly. It is dated December 9, 1997.

Mr Alex Cullen (Ottawa West): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I don't see a quorum.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Is there a quorum?

Clerk Assistant (Ms Deborah Deller): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk Assistant: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Speaker: Members' statements, member for Kenora.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

LABOUR DISPUTE

Mr Frank Miclash (Kenora): I am making an appeal to the new Minister of Labour today. The new Minister of Labour will be well aware that the Goldcorp mine in Red Lake — actually in Balmertown in my riding — has now been on strike for well over 18 months. I am receiving calls personally to my offices, many calls on many occasions, asking for the new Minister of Labour, now that we know we have a new Minister of Labour in this government, to become personally involved in this labour dispute, the longest strike in the province at the present time.

It's a strike that the new minister must become aware of and must get involved in. Today what I'm asking is for the minister, once we get into the break in January, to personally travel to Balmertown to meet with the miners at Goldcorp to find out what the problems are.

We have many families suffering. We've had teachers tell us that children are showing up at school hungry: "showing up with a tomato for lunch" was the statement that one teacher made in the past. What I'm asking this

government to do and what I'm asking the present Minister of Labour to do is take a keen interest, take an interest in what is the longest strike in the province of Ontario today, one that is happening in Golden today at the Goldcorp mine. I plead with the minister to take a personal involvement in this issue.

JOHN SEWELL

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): I rise today to congratulate John Sewell on his receipt of the Civic Award of Merit from the city of Toronto. Others have commented on the irony of John Sewell receiving the highest award of the city of Toronto in the same week that he was threatened with being barred from the legislative precinct.

On this occasion I would like to read some of his acceptance speech on his behalf. These are direct quotes:

"The role of the informed citizen in a democracy is critical. Reasonable sharing of financial resources is surely a cornerstone of a strong democratic society. But democracy in Ontario is under a fierce attack." I agree with him on this.

"First, no longer is our society one where every individual is valued and supported, and second, we know that democracy is under attack because the opinion of citizens is no longer valued" by this government. "The provincial government scorns such opinions. It refuses to explain its proposals or allow reasonable opportunities for public input. It is deceitful in its statements. It proposes to ban from its buildings those who complain."

Sewell concludes: "Our calling is to pursue the vision of the humane and democratic society in which everyone can feel at home. May we engage in this work together...."

ETOBICOKE ECONOMY

Mr Douglas B. Ford (Etobicoke-Humber): As recently noted by our government's Minister of Finance, the Ontario economy is showing many signs of improvement. Indication of that was evident today in my own riding. Building on the success of its first two locations, the newest Koo Koo Roo restaurant has now opened at Humber-town Shopping Centre. This morning I attended the opening celebrations, and I am pleased to report to the Legislature that this latest venture will result in 52 new full- and part-time jobs, and an investment of more than \$1.5 million to Etobicoke.

This is indicative of what is happening across the province. Ontario continues to lead the country in job creation. In fact, 204,000 new private sector jobs have been created in Ontario over the last nine months. This represents 63% of the total private sector jobs created in Canada. Beneficiaries of this endeavour in Etobicoke will be the youth, and this in turn will assist with their future. Evidence of that is also province-wide. Youth employment was up by 4,300 jobs in November. Over the last seven months, youth employment has increased by 43,000.

The partners in Koo Koo Roo Canada have a history of experienced management in operations, with a positive role in the community. I am pleased they chose Etobicoke for this new location, and I know the residents of the community are as well.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): Yesterday, the Hamilton fire department moved to take control and seize a warehouse on Gage Avenue North that was storing dangerous materials and chemicals. The department has done this as a result of extensive work that they have done since May to try to bring this company in line.

After the Plastimet fire, the fire marshal's office brought forward a report with a number of recommendations. Today as we sit here six months later, this government and the Solicitor General who spoke so highly of this report six months ago have not taken one step to implement one simple recommendation in this fire marshal's report. It is an absolute disgrace. It has taken the fire department six months. They have done a great job, a commendable job, but that is without the help of this government, without the help of the Solicitor General, who refuses to give local municipalities and fire departments the tools to deal with a dangerous industrial site such as we've had in Hamilton. This company was operating illegally. They had no sprinkler system. It sounds like the same old story.

I urge this minister to move on the priority here in ensuring the tools that municipalities need to go after companies that operate illegally, that pose a threat to the environment, pose a threat to neighbourhoods, and to do this — the minister has sat on his butt for six months with this report. People in our community and in our province will have to pay a price. I ask the Solicitor General to get on with it. Implement the fire marshal's recommendations and give us the power we need —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Statements.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Hold on.

1340

WINDSOR WOMEN OF THE YEAR AWARDS

Mr Wayne Lessard (Windsor-Riverside): I'm pleased to announce the recipients of the Windsor Women

of the Year Award for 1998: Shirley Ann Durocher, Usha Jacob and Maureen Rudall. They will be honoured for their community work at the 16th annual Women of the Year Award banquet sponsored by the Women's Incentive Centre —

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Members for Brant-Haldimand and Hamilton East, come to order. I know you want to continue this discussion and we have lobbies for that.

Mr Lessard: Speaker, I wonder if I could have the clock back to the original time so I could start over.

Shirley Ann Durocher has been a parliamentarian with the Beta Sigma Phi Sorority for 48 years. She is the vice-president of the local council of women, a board member of the Citizens' Advocacy Association of Windsor and Essex and an organizer for the Special Olympics.

Usha Jacob has been a volunteer, leader and role model for the South Asian community women in Windsor through her work over the past 20 years. She's been a member of the South Asian Centre, the Cultures of India Association, the Red Cross Society, the Victorian Order of Nurses, the La Salle Police Services Board, and many other organizations.

Constable Maureen Rudall was nominated by CAW Locals 1973 and 200 women's committees. She helped develop the Windsor Police Service domestic violence unit and now is a coordinator with the Windsor Police Service family violence unit. She volunteers at Hiatus House and the Women's Incentive Centre and has worked hard to make the Windsor area a safe and caring community.

I congratulate Shirley Ann Durocher, Usha Jacob and Maureen Rudall and thank them for the work they've done in our community.

CASINO NIAGARA

Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls): It's an honour for me to stand up in this Legislature and commemorate the first anniversary of the opening of Casino Niagara. One year ago today Casino Niagara opened its doors to the public and turned a dream into a reality for many of my constituents.

One of the key promises I made to my constituents during the 1995 provincial election was to work to bring a casino to Niagara Falls. I was proud to be part of a local team of citizens who worked diligently to convince our government that a casino in Niagara would be good for the local and provincial economy. There are 3,600 people directly employed in Casino Niagara, 3,000 more in the Niagara region also have jobs because of Casino Niagara, and another 3,000 throughout the province are employed through Casino Niagara's presence.

Since opening, Casino Niagara has been unrivalled in its success. Based on October 1997 figures, 10 million patrons have visited Casino Niagara, spending a total of \$453 million in the area.

Today I was delighted to be present at a ceremony marking the first anniversary at which Casino Niagara

gave \$500,000 to the MRI campaign in the Niagara region. It was a tremendous announcement and that's on top of a more recent announcement where Casino Niagara associates gave \$100,000 to the United Way campaign.

Many thanks and happy birthday to Casino Niagara.

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough North): Today marks the two-year anniversary of the day and night in December 1995 that my colleagues and I stayed in the Legislature to stop the omnibus Bill 26 from proceeding.

Bill 26 marked a watershed where this government started to show that it's all about bulldozing through with its agenda set out by the backroom whiz kids at all costs to democracy. The government's handling of Bill 26 sent the clear signal that Mike Harris's regime was going to govern with an iron fist and rule this province in a new, undemocratic way.

Then what did Mike Harris's Tories do? They made unprecedented changes to the rules of this Legislature to limit the opposition in the House. They set more time allocation motions than we have ever seen to limit debate over major provincial issues. Is this what democracy means for Mike Harris's Ontario?

In the words of Jefferson about 200 years ago, "The tyranny of the Legislature is really the danger the most to be feared." What Jefferson was warning us against was governments that use their majorities to bulldoze their way over the will of the people, warning us about the arrogance that even an elected majority government can have.

Mike Harris is the politician leading that kind of arrogant government. Demonstrators have ranged from ordinary citizens, union members, civil servants and firefighters. This fall we saw 126,000 teachers in the province walk off the job in protest against Bill 160. Teachers gave up two weeks' salary —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you.

EDUCATION REFORM

Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East): Despite the passage of Bill 160, public concern about the bill and this government's destructive education agenda is growing. Students, parents and teachers do not believe the government listened to their concerns with respect to the bill and are looking for a way to hold the Conservatives accountable for ramming it through.

That's why there is widespread support for the petition campaign. Parents' groups in particular want to compel this Conservative government to hold a referendum on Bill 160. If the bill is so good, then this government should not be afraid to stand by its own rules on referendums and let the people have their say.

My colleague from Nickel Belt and I launched the start of our local campaign to collect signatures three weeks ago. The response in the Sudbury area has been overwhelming. Last Thursday, students at Laurentian University held a press conference to announce they have

gathered 1,000 signatures already. The Steelworkers, CUPE, OPSEU, CAW, the Labourers all have petitions in their workplaces and petitions for available for signing at their offices. OSSTF has petitions at its office and all the teachers' affiliates have distributed copies to their members. Many school council presidents have already picked up their petitions. All presidents will receive a package on the campaign and their petitions by the end of the week. Local legions and seniors' groups have obtained their copies too.

My office and the office of the member for Nickel Belt have been flooded by calls asking where to sign or obtain the petition. On Saturday alone, 160 people stopped by at our booth to sign.

I encourage people who are concerned to continue with this important work and this campaign —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you.

LANARK-RENFREW ECONOMY

Mr W. Leo Jordan (Lanark-Renfrew): I take this opportunity to report on expansions and initiatives that have and will lead to job creation and prosperity in Lanark county.

Hershey chocolate in Smiths Falls is expanding its production line to include Mr Freeze and Jolly Rancher Freeze Pops which will create 40 new full-time jobs. Perth Soap increased its full-time employment from 40 to 65 employees and has created work for 50 full-time contractors.

On the electronic highway front, the Lanark Communications Network, with substantial support from this government and partners in Lanark county, has leveraged \$3.7 million to build an integrated telecommunications system for the county. This regional initiative will develop the electronic infrastructure that creates jobs, provides better access to social and educational services and ultimately breaks down the barriers of distance to draw Lanark even closer to the global economy.

Finally, I want to thank all those who have made Lanark a better place for taxpayers by reducing the number of governments from 30 to 16, and especially former warden Gordon Patterson, acting warden Ormond Giles, Chris Tyson and —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

INSTITUTE FOR ADVANCED JUDAIC STUDIES ACT, 1997

Mr Cordiano moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr95, An Act respecting Institute for Advanced Judaic Studies.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

FUEL AND GASOLINE TAX
AMENDMENT ACT, 1997

LOI DE 1997 MODIFIANT LA LOI
DE LA TAXE SUR LES CARBURANTS
ET LA LOI DE LA TAXE SUR L'ESSENCE

Mr Hodgson moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 173, An Act to amend the Fuel Tax Act and the Gasoline Tax Act / Projet de loi 173, Loi modifiant la Loi de la taxe sur les carburants et la Loi de la taxe sur l'essence.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Northern Development and Mines): The Fuel and Gasoline Tax Amendment Act, 1997, delivers on the 1997 budget commitment to make fuel and gasoline tax rules fairer and more efficient, cut red tape and preserve tax revenues.

Responding to the fuel and gasoline industry concerns, the bill will require a consistent system for measuring the volume of fuel for both billing for tax and product sale purposes. This is to ensure changes in volume due to chemistry are taken into account in the same way for both calculations.

This bill will remove barriers to marketing special products such as diesel and heating fuel refined from waste oil. To improve tax fairness, this bill will enhance the objections in the appeals process and ensure Ontario has the same priority as other jurisdictions to collect taxes held in trust.

The Fuel and Gasoline Tax Amendment Act, 1997, will make the tax system fairer for this important industry that plays a key role in keeping Ontario's economy moving.

DEFERRED VOTES

RED TAPE REDUCTION ACT
(MINISTRY OF NORTHERN
DEVELOPMENT AND MINES), 1997

LOI DE 1997 VISANT À RÉDUIRE
LES FORMALITÉS ADMINISTRATIVES
AU MINISTÈRE DU DÉVELOPPEMENT
DU NORD ET DES MINES

Deferred vote on the motion for second reading of Bill 120, An Act to reduce red tape by amending the Mining Act / Projet de loi 120, Loi visant à réduire les formalités administratives au ministère du Développement du Nord et des Mines.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1351 to 1357.

The Speaker: All those in favour please stand one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Agostino, Dominic	Galt, Doug	Munro, Julia
Amott, Ted	Gerretsen, John	Mushinski, Marilyn
Baird, John R.	Gilchrist, Steve	Newman, Dan
Barrett, Toby	Gravelle, Michael	O'Toole, John
Bartolucci, Rick	Grimmett, Bill	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Beaubien, Marcel	Guzzo, Garry J.	Parker, John L.
Bisson, Gilles	Hampton, Howard	Patten, Richard
Boyd, Marion	Hardeman, Ernie	Pettit, Trevor
Brown, Michael A.	Hamick, Charles	Phillips, Gerry
Carr, Gary	Hodgson, Chris	Pouliot, Gilles
Carroll, Jack	Hoy, Pat	Preston, Peter
Christopherson, David	Jackson, Cameron	Ramsay, David
Chudleigh, Ted	Johns, Helen	Rollins, E.J. Douglas
Churley, Marilyn	Johnson, Bert	Ross, Lillian
Cleary, John C.	Johnson, David	Runciman, Robert W.
Clement, Tony	Johnson, Ron	Sampson, Rob
Colle, Mike	Jordan, Leo	Saunderson, William
Conway, Sean G.	Kells, Morley	Shea, Derwyn
Cordiano, Joseph	Kennedy, Gerard	Sheehan, Frank
Crozier, Bruce	Klees, Frank	Silipo, Tony
Cullen, Alex	Kormos, Peter	Smith, Bruce
Cunningham, Dianne	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Snobelen, John
Danford, Harry	Laughren, Floyd	Spina, Joseph
DeFaria, Carl	Leach, Al	Stewart, R. Gary
Doyle, Ed	Marchese, Rosario	Tascona, Joseph N.
Duncan, Dwight	Marland, Margaret	Tilson, David
Ecker, Janet	Martel, Shelley	Tsubouchi, David H.
Elliott, Brenda	Martin, Tony	Turnbull, David
Fisher, Barbara	Maves, Bart	Villeneuve, Noble
Flaherty, Jim	McGuinty, Dalton	Wildman, Bud
Ford, Douglas B.	McLeod, Lyn	Witmer, Elizabeth
Fox, Gary	Miclash, Frank	Wood, Len
Froese, Tom	Morin, Gilles E.	Young, Terence H.

The Speaker: All those opposed please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 99; the nays are 0.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried. Shall the bill be ordered for third reading? Agreed.

ORAL QUESTIONS

CHARITABLE GAMING

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations. Minister, I want to talk to you today about the subject of gambling and your mad, reckless rush to expand it in Ontario. Before we get into this in some detail, I want to take you back to some of the things that your leader and the deputy leader said in the past.

The Premier once said in this Legislature: "Gaming doesn't come cheap. I have to agree with a lot of the critics on that. It brings crime. It brings prostitution. It brings a lot of the things that maybe areas didn't have before. There is a big cost to pay."

During the course of the election, when questioned about the potential revenues from expanded gambling, he said: "I don't want the money. I don't want the Ontario government to have it."

Your deputy leader once said, "Sure the income comes, the money comes, but there are some side effects that aren't so wonderful: drug trafficking, increased petty

crimes of all kinds, increased prostitution...policing needs, societal costs, gambling addiction."

My simple question is, what happened?

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations): I think we need to revisit, as we've been doing on a fairly constant basis in the House, what we're trying to do with respect to the charity gaming clubs. We've clearly been told by the police and we've clearly been told by charities that the current system, which was introduced under the Liberal Peterson government, was not working, for several reasons.

First, let's look at the police perspective. Currently, I think anyone who reads the paper, whether in the Toronto Sun or the Toronto Star, can see there have been a number of armed robberies taking place at the roving casinos that have been held because there's a lack of security. There's a lack of knowledge by the police in fact where all these things are popping up all over the province.

There have been a number of charges as well which have been laid against a number of operators in this area for a variety of cheating offences. We've been told by Detective Staff Sergeant Fotia of the OPP there's a real need to do something about this system because it's not working. Clearly we're listening to the police in trying to replace a system that's not working with one that has some integrity.

Mr McGuinty: Look, just stand up and say you flip-flopped on it. At one time you said it was a bad thing, but now apparently it's a good thing.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order.

Mr McGuinty: The minister can try to couch it as being something that's going to benefit Ontario charities, but the fact of the matter is that this minister is going to ensure that an additional \$1 billion in gambling revenue is going to be poured into provincial coffers. That's what this is about. This is a money grab by this government through gambling.

What I want the minister to understand is that some of this money is money that would have been dedicated to groceries or to rent or to children's clothing. I want the minister to understand that gambling hurts Ontario families. I want him to understand and to admit that the real reason they're after another \$1 billion is to deliver on this foolish, ill-considered tax cut promise that's going to cost us \$5 billion. They need \$1 billion from gambling revenues to put towards the tax cut. That's what this is all about.

What I want to ask the minister is quite simply this: Is it really worth the cost to Ontario families to take another \$1 billion from them through gambling revenue?

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: First of all, your numbers are wrong.

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): What are your numbers?

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: You know, your research department I think needs a little work. I think what we need to look at here —

Interjections.

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: I think we need to look at very closely the reasons why this is happening. The old system, which was introduced under the Liberal government, clearly lacked the enforcement, it lacked the accountability, it lacked the integrity needed to really be accountable to charities.

What's really laughable about this is that under the old system, last year there were 4,900 of these events across the province, which resulted in over 15,000 gaming days. Open up the Toronto Sun every morning and you can see the number of events that are happening just in this general area.

To police 4,900 events and 15,000 gaming days, the previous government had six police officers. You don't need to be a rocket scientist to understand that six police officers cannot police 4,900 events. This is what the police have been telling us. This is what the police have been saying. They need the tools to deal with this. That's clearly what we're giving them right now.

Mr McGuinty: I think the minister is afraid to admit that he's expanding gambling in Ontario. That's what you're doing. Just admit to that. You're introducing 6,600 video lottery terminals into Ontario that weren't here before. You're introducing those. They're the crack cocaine equivalent for gambling. That's what that's all about. You're going to introduce 44 new casinos.

The public has clearly spoken on this. They understand what gambling does to Ontarians. They don't want anything more to do with it. For some reason now you're trying to skirt around that and continue this expansion.

I think there are a number of questions we've got to answer before we go any further down that road. How much gambling money is coming from grocery money? How much is coming from rent money? How much is coming from children's clothing money? How much damage is gambling causing in terms of depression, violence and abuse in the family home? You've got to answer those questions.

Minister, before we have the answers to those questions, would it not make sense to declare a moratorium? Isn't that the right and responsible thing to do in Ontario today?

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: I think we need to talk about some accountability here. When the Peterson government introduced the three-day roving casinos in Ontario, it did not give one penny —

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): You're the one expanding. That Jan Dymond answer doesn't work any more. Why are you hiding those contracts? What's secret in those contracts?

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: I hear the member for St Catharines screaming about addiction. Let's talk about that for a second. When the Peterson government introduced the roving casinos, it did not give —

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Minister.

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: As I was saying, when the Liberal government of Peterson introduced the roving casinos, it didn't give one penny to gaming addictions. To the

credit of the NDP government, when it introduced commercial casinos, it allocated \$1 million to deal with this problem.

Under this new plan, we're able to allocate around \$9 million to gaming addictions. This is money that's been clearly welcomed by many of the organizations out there, that say it's very important for them to have these kind of tools.

I'll also remind the Leader of the Opposition that yours was the party that wanted to introduce the lottery for the environment. I believe the member for St Catharines, who is screaming at me right now, was the one who wanted to introduce this lottery, so he's no stranger to introducing gaming to this province.

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SPECIAL EDUCATION

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition):

My second question is for the Minister of Education. I want to bring to your attention a crisis at the Ottawa Board of Education right now with respect to a particular program for students over the age of 21. There are 72 students involved in this program. They are developmentally delayed. Their funding is at risk next year. What the parents are looking for is some commitment from you, some solemn assurance that they need not worry.

That program has been funded to date for 72 young adults who are having difficulty learning, to learn basic kinds of skills at school — job skills, how to read signs, how to handle money, possibly get some kind of basic entry-level job. They want your assurance, Minister, since you now have all responsibility for all education, including funding in Ontario, that this program will not be lost and that their children will be able to continue attending school in those programs in the coming years.

Hon David Johnson (Minister of Education and Training): This situation arose because of one particular individual maybe in a specific way, but it certainly involves a number of other people. The individual, as the leader of the official opposition has mentioned in the past, is, as I understand it, currently enrolled and is participating in the classroom.

In terms of the future, the funding model will certainly allocate moneys for various circumstances in terms of learning opportunities: special education grants for other paraprofessionals, for example, who may be available in a supportive sense. The moneys will be made available to each board on a fair and consistent basis across the province, and the boards will have the opportunity to provide the programs that their students need in their jurisdictions.

Mr McGuinty: I don't think the parents watching this today can take much comfort from what you said, so I'm going to give you another opportunity. There are 72 students enrolled in this post-21 program. They are developmentally delayed. They're following programs like life skills, job skills, literacy, which means essentially learning how to read signs and labels, and basic numeracy skills, which means learning how to handle money.

All they want to know is that you are going to guarantee them that this program is going to survive under the Mike Harris education regime. That's the question in its most simple form. Can you provide them with the assurance that this program is going to survive under the Mike Harris education regime?

Hon David Johnson: I can certainly provide the assurance that in terms of the consideration of the formula, all these kinds of programs have been brought in and considered under the umbrella of the full formula and all the moneys that are being spent today by the various boards across the province of Ontario, including the money spent on this particular program and all the other special education programs, will indeed be part of that funding formula. The boards will be allocated fair and equitable funding right across the province: the Ottawa board, the Metro Toronto board, all the boards across the province. They should have every opportunity to provide these sorts of programs to the children who need them.

Mr McGuinty: You're still not giving me a yes. The Ottawa Board of Education has scrimped, scrounged and saved and pulled this program together to meet the needs of 72 developmentally delayed adults over the age of 21. Their parents aren't asking for a heck of a lot. Some of their kids are never, ever going to leave home. All they're asking for from you is that the program that their children are benefiting from today will survive in the future.

You wanted control of education; you've got it. Here's where the rubber hits the road. This is an important program. It serves an important social need; it's meeting an important social objective. The question is very simple: Will you guarantee that this program is going to survive under the Mike Harris education regime in Ontario?

Hon David Johnson: What I will guarantee, unlike the leader of the third party, who wants to roll back the clock, who wants to turn back the education system, who has indicated he's prepared to turn back Bill 160 and the other improvements that have been brought into the education system, is that not just one board, not just the board in Ottawa, but each and every board across Ontario will have fair and equitable funding which will take into account all the needs: the special education needs, the early learning opportunity needs, the adult continuing education needs. Then that money will be made available to the boards on the basis of their particular situation and it will be up to the boards, as it is at the present time, to deliver those services to their students.

EDUCATION REFORM

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): I have a question to the Minister of Education and Training. I have a letter from the Ontario Federation of Home and School Associations. It's a letter directed to you. The federation says in this letter:

"The 18,000 members of the Ontario Federation of Home and School Associations believe that education is a partnership between students, parents, teachers, communities, school boards and the provincial government.

Bill 160 represents a breaking of that partnership. Despite the objections of tens of thousands of people, your government is prepared to push forward with its agenda."

Minister, can you tell us why you ignored the advice, and you continue to ignore the advice, of such a grass-roots parents' organization like the Ontario Federation of Home and School Associations; why you ignore their heartfelt advice and continue to ram ahead your negative education agenda?

Hon David Johnson (Minister of Education and Training): Unlike the leader of the third party, and the third party in general, this government is intent on listening to the message that the people of Ontario have conveyed over the last many years that there needs to be reform in education.

We need to do two things in particular. The two most notable things are, first, to improve the quality in the education system, which is part of Bill 160 and part of the overall reforms that are associated with the education system in general, and second, we need to make sure that there is efficiency and a value in the education system; that we can do better for less in the education system and give quality to the students and value to the taxpayer. This government said it would do that and this government is going to do that.

Mr Hampton: I didn't have an answer to my question, so I'll ask it again. The Ontario Federation of Home and School Associations is one of those grass-roots parents' organizations that supports schools all across this province. They are the people who go to the meetings before school starts in the morning, at lunchtime, after school and in the evenings. They are truly a grass-roots organization. This is what they say about your educational agenda:

"The specific objections have been previously detailed in our initial brief which was addressed to you. They include issues of authority, accountability, accessibility to parents, funding and quality."

They then go on to say in their letter: "We have strongly demonstrated a desire to work with all stakeholders to enhance the education of students. The government's actions around Bill 160 have alienated many."

Minister, how can you override the advice of these people who do the grass-roots parents' work in our schools? How can you ignore them?

Hon David Johnson: For many years now — decades, I would say — the people of Ontario have been saying, "We need to improve the education system in the province." When your government was in place you commissioned various reports — the Sweeney report, the Royal Commission on Learning — and these bodies brought forward recommendations for improvements in education. Unfortunately, your government did not take specific actions to address the concerns of the parents and the people of Ontario.

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If you're talking about people writing in, I have a letter from a gentleman in Ontario. It says: "I fully support the contents of Bill 160. I urge the government to be firm."

I have another letter from another lady who says: "As a person who worked for years in the public school system, I would like to send my support to you."

I have a resident of Mississauga who says: "I just wanted you to know that I support your position 100%. Do not back down."

There are many people out there who are behind the government, who want to see a better quality and efficiency within the educational system.

Mr Hampton: The minister's staff should give him some new letters. Those are the same letters you read two weeks ago. I will refer people to Hansard because they are direct quotes of what you read two weeks ago. The minister has a stack of three letters and he reads them over and over again. You've missed the point.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order. Member for Hamilton East, it would be helpful if you went back to your seat.

Government members, please come to order. I want to hear the question. Thank you. Leader of the third party.

Mr Hampton: At least the minister's staff can perhaps scramble the order of the three letters so they won't come up in the same order all the time.

Minister, here is the point: The Ontario Federation of Home and School Associations represents the grass roots. They represent the people who do a lot of the fund-raising for our schools. They represent the parents who are actually out there involved in education. You have totally ignored them. You have totally denied them any credibility, any currency on the issue of education.

Let me tell you what they are doing. They are among the groups out there who are going to get 700,000 signatures on a petition demanding a referendum on Bill 160. They are not taking this lying down. Minister, when you receive those 700,000 signatures from eligible voters across this province, will you then do the right thing? Will you honour their request for a referendum?

Hon David Johnson: I don't know why the words of Winston Churchill come to me at this point, when he said, "The member is never fortunate in the coincidence of his facts with the truth." I don't know why I think of the —

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Minister.

Hon David Johnson: I gather they finally understood us.

I will say that, over the years, surely the leader of the third party has talked to parents through the years, the people of Ontario, who have said that the education system is not satisfactory. We are spending a lot of money in the education system. We are not getting the value. Our students are not having the same opportunities as students in other provinces. Our students in national and international competitions are not performing to the level that we expect.

We want the quality improvement, the report card, the testing, the longer school year, for example, that they have in other jurisdictions. We have listened to that, we have acted upon that. We are introducing the quality, we are

giving value. These are the things that the people of Ontario want to see and this government, for one, is prepared to deliver.

WATER HEATER RENTAL RATES

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): I have a question for the minister who is responsible for protecting consumers in the province; I think his title is Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations. I'm reading from a Pollution Probe press release: "Hundreds of thousands of Ontario natural gas consumers stand to be charged 40% more to rent the same water heaters that are already in their basements if an Ontario Energy Board decision is allowed to stand."

You're supposed to be protecting consumers. Are you going to stand up for consumers on this? Are you, in your position in cabinet, going to ask that this Ontario Energy Board decision be reviewed? Are you going to protect consumers from being gouged \$35 million more while at the same time receiving no additional service?

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations): The response I've got for the leader of the third party is that apparently there has been an application to the Ontario Energy Board for approval to transfer their water heater rental business to an affiliate and not, as he suggests, to increase the rental rates. I think that's something he should certainly check out.

Mr Hampton: We can see how interested this Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations is in protecting consumers. If you look at the fine print of the OEB decision, you will find that implicit in this is, as I say, an increase of over \$35 million, and they've admitted it.

Under sections 13 and 26 of the Ontario Energy Board Act, your colleague the Minister of Energy can force the Ontario Energy Board to hold a hearing and can force them to consider whether the gas companies' 40% rate hike is in the public interest; in other words, you can force them to look at the public interest. If you don't force them to do this, then people are going to be ripped off to the tune of \$35 million. Will you do your job for consumers? Will you ask your colleague to use his powers under the Ontario Energy Board Act and force a hearing on the public interest?

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: The leader of the third party will know that water heater rental rates are not regulated by the board. They're not currently and they weren't when you were the government either, and I assume that when you were in cabinet you would have known that.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Final supplementary, member for Riverdale.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): What a terrible message Ontario is sending out right now while a major international conference is going on on global warming, because if this goes ahead, fewer people will switch from electricity to gas, and that means more pollutants which contribute to global warming.

Your government has cut the budget of the Ontario Energy Board by 15%. The gas companies have suggested to the OEB that these cuts are a good reason for less regulation, and the board seems to agree with that. As a result partially of your cuts, the environment will suffer and consumers will pay more, so I'm asking you today: Come on, give us a straight answer here unequivocally. Condemn this price gouging by the gas companies. Will you demand that the energy minister order a hearing in the public interest? You are the minister responsible for consumers. You can do something about it. Stand up today and say you will. Protect the consumer.

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: I guess there are two members of the third party who were in the former cabinet when they were in power under Premier Rae, who should know that in fact it is the same as when they were in government, that the OEB does not regulate the water heater rental rates. Clearly not only do they not regulate them, but with respect to the hearing they're referring to, it's only for approval to transfer their rental business to an affiliate. It has absolutely nothing to do with rental rates.

The Speaker: New question, official opposition.

Ms Churley: You should not be reading that briefing note. You are going to be in big trouble over this. You should have stood up for consumers today.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Member for Riverdale, thank you, and the member for Perth.

1430

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew North): My question is to the same minister on the same issue. The proponents, Union and Centra, have made it plain that they intend to take their energy services business, which is currently regulated, out from underneath the regulatory framework and off to an unregulated energy services business. They have also advanced material — the Wood Gundy study, to be specific — that makes plain that the 870,000 Ontarians who currently rent hot water units from those two companies can expect upwards of a 40% increase in their annual rentals.

Minister, what are you going to do, as the minister responsible for consumer protection, to protect the nearly 900,000 Ontarians who are going to be liable for stiff increases because of this particular move?

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: First of all, the water heater rental rates are not regulated, so that's incorrect. They weren't regulated under the Liberal government or the NDP government. They never were regulated. In fact, if we can refer once again to the reality of what we're dealing with, this hearing has got nothing to do with water heater rental rates; it has to do with the transfer part of the business. Clearly, both opposition parties should know that it has nothing to do with rates.

If we're going to speculate on what's happening as opposed to the realities —

Interjections.

The Speaker: Member for Oakwood, please come to order. Minister.

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: Clearly, if there is a point in time at which there is some sort of danger of immense rate hikes, we will certainly be there to support the consumer.

Ms Churley: It's now. It's happening now.

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: You're clearly wrong; it is not now. We're talking about the transfer of services; we're not talking about rental rates, nor, once again, were they regulated under your government or under the Liberal government.

Mr Conway: Just a few weeks ago, Premier Mike Harris mounted a white stallion and rode around this Legislature and this province saying that he was going to protect Ontario consumers against the gouging oil companies. Remember that? It was just a few months ago.

My question remains. Groups as divergent as Pollution Probe and Wood Gundy have agreed that this proposal from Union Gas and Centra Gas will almost certainly expose nearly a million consumers of hot water unit rentals in southern Ontario to annual increases in the order of 40%, because under the proposal, Union and Centra plan to take their energy services business, including hot water unit rentals, out of the existing regulated environment, aside into an unregulated business. The Wood Gundy study makes it plain that if that is allowed, there will be increases of a substantial kind.

Minister, what are you going to do, as the minister responsible for consumer protection, to intervene at the board hearing to protect the nearly one million consumers who are at risk?

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: There are more twists and turns to that particular question than on the road to Pali. You probably don't know where that is.

First of all, as you should know, water heater rates are not regulated.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: If we could deal with realities first of all, and then we'll deal with something else, once again, this is not regulated. It wasn't regulated under you, nor was it regulated under the NDP. Clearly this is not a hearing to deal with this; that's real.

Now, dealing with the consumer, if there is any danger that there are going to be huge price hikes to the consumers of this province, we'll stand up for the consumer, we'll intervene and we'll make sure that doesn't happen.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): My question is to the new Minister of Labour. As tradition dictates, I want to take this opportunity to congratulate him on his elevation to cabinet and wish him well.

I want to raise an issue that I know was of concern to the previous labour minister, so it's likely that you've been briefed on this also. I want to know if you believe it to be appropriate for a government backbencher to simultaneously (1) act as a lawyer for employers in employment standards cases, (2) work to change existing legislation to make it more favourable for his employer clients, and (3)

also take an active role as a lawyer and MPP to prevent some of his constituents from being paid money that your own ministry officials have concluded they are legally entitled to. What do you think about that kind of conduct, Minister?

Hon Jim Flaherty (Minister of Labour): I thank the honourable member for the question. I am pleased to have the opportunity to answer my first question in the House.

On the day I was sworn in I made it a priority to call some of the union leaders in the province and I was lucky to reach Sid Ryan of CUPE, and also Gord Wilson, the president of the Ontario Federation of Labour. I was pleased subsequently to have an opportunity to congratulate Wayne Samuelson on his election as the new president of the Ontario Federation of Labour.

As you know, our party and our government remain committed to effective collective bargaining in Ontario and to using the best solutions always as the negotiated solutions between the parties.

If you have some particulars with respect to the matter you've raised, I'd be happy to answer your question, but I'm not sure what you're referring to.

Mr Christopherson: Obviously, we haven't got to that briefing yet. Let me see if I can help out. There are two workers in the gallery today who worked for a company that went bankrupt in the Barrie area. They went to the Ministry of Labour and your ministry officials agreed they should be paid severance and back wages.

They are amazed and angry, however, that one of your government backbenchers, MPP Joe Tascona, has been working for two years now to stop them from getting their money. This is the same Joe Tascona, member for Simcoe Centre, who worked hard as a committee member, and speaking in this House, to get the Employment Standards Act changed in ways that benefit his employer clients.

They believe this is a clear conflict of interest. I and my caucus believe this is a clear conflict of interest. Minister, do you believe this is a clear conflict of interest?

Hon Mr Flaherty: The honourable member has raised a question that he views, I gather, as a conflict-of-interest matter. As the honourable member knows, those matters are governed by the Integrity Commissioner in the province. I'm sure if there is genuine concern on the part of the member, he'll raise the matter in the appropriate forum with the Integrity Commissioner.

Mr Christopherson: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Anticipating that answer, because I knew he wouldn't take responsibility, in accordance with section 30 of the Members' Integrity Act I am now providing you, Speaker, in writing, with a copy of my request that the Integrity Commissioner investigate this matter and provide an opinion as to whether or not —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Member for Hamilton Centre, that is not a point of order. You may file that at any time.

1440

LABOUR RELATIONS AND EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Mr Carl DeFaria (Mississauga East): My question is also to the Minister of Labour. My constituents would like to know what we as a government are doing to ensure that Ontario has a system of labour relations that is both fair and balanced and which reflects the needs of both working families and employers in Ontario.

Hon Jim Flaherty (Minister of Labour): I thank the member for Mississauga East for the question. As I emphasized to the labour leaders with whom I've been pleased to meet since being appointed minister, we remain committed to the collective bargaining process. We believe that the best solutions are the solutions reached by the parties in a self-reliant way. Our government is committed to a fair and balanced system, a system that reflects the needs of employers and employees. We believe in a stable labour relations environment that promotes growth and confidence and we're prepared to make the tough decisions to maintain a stable labour relations —

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Member for Welland-Thorold and member for Hamilton Centre, please come to order.

Hon Mr Flaherty: By cutting red tape, by eliminating waste and duplication, by making the government more accountable to the taxpayer, by creating an environment that creates jobs, attracts investment, by keeping our promises to the working families of Ontario, we are now, more than ever before, able to improve the service taxpayers are entitled to expect for their hard-earned tax dollars. A stable, fair, balanced labour relations system is an essential cornerstone of our plan for Ontario families. We made our promise in the Common Sense Revolution and we have kept it.

Mr DeFaria: As you stated, in the last election we promised in the Common Sense Revolution to restore balance to labour relations. I know we have kept that promise.

My follow-up question is in the area of employment standards. What is the government doing to ensure that working conditions in Ontario are among the best in the world?

Hon Mr Flaherty: The question raises the important issue of the relationship between employers and employees in the province relating to employment standards. Our government is committed to a comprehensive review of the Employment Standards Act which will result in a system that better serves employers and employees.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I'm not going to warn the member for Welland-Thorold again, nor the member for Cochrane South, and the member for Lake Nipigon as well. I'm warning you to come to order. If I have to get up again I will name you.

Hon Mr Flaherty: This comprehensive review will not be about deregulation or lowering standards. It will be about ensuring that vulnerable workers are protected, giving employers and employees the flexibility they need while maintaining a set of basic standards, strengthening workplace self-reliance, focusing protection and enforcement where it is most needed and providing clear definitions in understandable language for the benefit of both employers and employees. This statute has not been revised since about 1974. It is anticipated that we will be in a position to release a discussion paper later this winter, which will be followed by extensive consultation.

CARDIAC CARE

Mr Gerard Kennedy (York South): I have a question for the Minister of Health. I'm speaking today on behalf of patients with heart problems in this province. They heard your answer the other day, and many of the people treating them did. The system we have in cardiac care is falling behind the rest of the world. We simply are not keeping pace.

You tried to tell us the other day that we were dealing with things, but in fact we've got longer waiting lists. You may not know this because your ministry doesn't keep track, but people are dying on some of those waiting lists. There's a 26% increase in the number of people waiting for cardiac tests and there has only been, despite the efforts that have been made by some of the hospitals, a 6% increase in procedures.

A simple thing is needed here: a commitment on your part to meet the target set by your own ministry, which is going to require more money to get to the end of the year and take some desperate, worried people out of the hospital beds to get the tests that they need. Will you make that commitment to us today?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health): I certainly understand the concern. As I have indicated to you since becoming Minister of Health and as my predecessor indicated to you, certainly cardiac care is a priority for our government. In fact, I've indicated that we've already spent well in excess of \$50 million to ensure that we can reduce the waiting lists. We now have the Cardiac Care Network of Ontario, which is providing us with the best advice possible. Surgeries are up this year across the province by at least 13%, and we are continuing to do everything we can — the recent announcement of another \$5.2 million that I made, and that was for capital renovations in eight centres throughout this province. We continue to move ahead very aggressively and we are doing what the previous government was not able to do: We are responding to the needs of patients in this province.

Mr Kennedy: I don't think, to heart patients in this province, that counting on money and not counting in terms of people is acceptable. There's a 28% increase in the number of people on the waiting lists and you chose not to address that at all.

There are some other people I want you to be aware of. There are 100 people between now and the end of the

fiscal year who need a new lifesaving device. It's called an implantable cardiac defibrillator. You personally, Minister — your ministry rations these devices. We are way behind the rest of the world in availability of this device. There are studies out now that show this can increase the survival rate of heart attack victims by 44% over other methods, and already hospitals are having to send people away to other hospitals, spend money out of the budgets they don't have. Minister, there are 100 people affected here, people with severe heart problems and people who need your response. Will you provide additional funding to ensure they can receive the treatment they need this year?

Hon Mrs Witmer: I would just like to share with you some information regarding how the \$58 million has been invested into cardiac care. Since our investment was made, there are 14,000 procedures that have meant a difference in the lives of people in this province. Also, you refer to the ICD. They were included in the \$35 million that we announced earlier this year, in March, and there are over 200 that have been put in place in the last year.

We continue to move forward. We are responding to the needs. We realize this is a priority area for people in this province and, as I've indicated, \$58 million since we were elected. We will continue to respond to the needs of the patients in this province.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): My question is for the Minister of Labour. Yesterday in the House, our leader raised a question of unemployment and older workers. I've met in Sault Ste Marie with around a dozen older workers over the last couple of months who have lost their jobs at Sears. None of them was given a legitimate reason for their termination except that the company was restructuring. All have been replaced primarily by younger part-time workers. Most of these people were but a few years away from qualifying for their pensions.

Is this kind of behaviour okay with you? Is this what the new economy is about and what older workers in the Harris Ontario are to expect?

Hon Jim Flaherty (Minister of Labour): I'm not familiar with the particular issue that my friend the member raises concerning Sears. I'd be happy to look into the Sears issue if he wishes.

As the member knows, employment in Ontario is up more than 250,000 jobs since our government was elected in 1995, and welfare rolls have been reduced by about 250,000. In terms of job creation, it is good in Ontario and additional jobs continue to be created.

Mr Martin: Minister, Sears is but one example of this phenomenon that is happening across the province. I suggest to you that it's probably becoming somewhat epidemic, as older workers are laid off so that you can hire more younger workers and add them to your employment statistics. Will you, as a responsible minister of the crown, work within your cabinet to tighten up employment stan-

dards so that companies like Sears can no longer abuse older workers in this way?

Hon Mr Flaherty: As I've already indicated this afternoon here, we are committed to embarking on a review of the Employment Standards Act. It is a statute that has not been revised since 1974. Most users find it quite cumbersome and awkward to use. I have made that commitment. We intend to release the discussion paper during this winter.

1450

TVONTARIO

Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East): My question is for the Minister without Portfolio responsible for privatization. My question relates to the review of TVOntario presently being undertaken by his ministry, and specifically the public meetings which have recently taken place across the province.

I received a call from a constituent in my riding, a Mr Dave Austin, who attended the TVOntario community forum here in Toronto on November 19. Mr Austin was pleased with the opportunity he had to express his views at the meeting and he indicated to me that there was a very large turnout at that event.

Minister, he asked me whether he'll be able to get a copy of the report of the community forum panel. You indicated that you're committed to a fair and open process, and I would ask you to provide assurance to my constituent that the report will indeed be made public.

Hon Rob Sampson (Minister without Portfolio [Privatization]): I want to thank the honourable member for his question. Let me say at the outset that he is indeed correct, or his constituent is correct, that the public forums were well attended not only here in Toronto but throughout the province. I'd also like to take this opportunity to congratulate the panel for their hard work and effort in doing the forum for us and travelling throughout Ontario to listen to the views of Ontarians as we ask them how they value and what they see as important in TVO.

As for the next step, the chair of the panel has indicated to me that he is looking towards the end of the month in providing me his report, and of course those findings will be public.

Mr Gilchrist: I understand that the series of public meetings that took place across the province — Thunder Bay, London, Toronto and Ottawa — have just concluded. I wonder if the minister could provide an explanation to the chamber on how the panel's report will fit into the overall review of TVOntario by the Office of Privatization.

Hon Mr Sampson: As we stated when we announced the privatization framework, we believe Ontarians have a role to play when we assess the various government businesses that are under review. The panel that conducted a number of hearings throughout Ontario is just part and parcel of how Ontarians will have that role to play.

We in the secretariat are receiving phone calls, letters, e-mail, from a number of Ontarians who either were not

able to participate in the particular forums or have elected to communicate to us directly. That information, in addition to the information we received from our business consultants, will be put together, and based upon that collective information we will be able to make the decision on TVO and other matters.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): My question is to the Minister of Health. Last Thursday afternoon, a very tragic event happened in the city of Kingston. Without any advance warning, your officials abruptly closed two Kingston centres providing services for those with mental illness: the Community Crisis Centre and the Kingston Clubhouse Activity Centre. You dismissed the staff on only four hours' notice, changed the locks in the centres and hired security guards to stand watch. According to your officials, a drawn-out closing would "provoke anxiety among the centres' clients."

The crisis centre serves hundreds of people in the community. The clubhouse centre has operated for 16 years and has served more than 150 of the most vulnerable in our society. This is their second home, a place where they feel accepted, where they are working on their self-confidence and self-esteem.

What are you going to do to reopen those centres, to give the community a chance to find another sponsor so that those people can once again regain their home? I demand something from you, Minister.

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health): I think it's important to know that this was a decision that was made by the board of Kingston Friendship Homes, as there was some overlap in the types of programs that were being offered at that time. However, I will tell you what I have done. I have asked for some information regarding the way in which the situation was handled on Friday. I would agree with you: I need an explanation and you deserve an explanation as well, as do the people in the Kingston community.

Mr Gerretsen: The people who have used these centres for the last 15 years need more than an explanation. I'm not concerned about some kind of turf war between competing organizations. What I'm concerned about are some of the issues that are addressed in letters to the editor and in an editorial today. One of the persons who uses the centre, a Phyllis Sparks, states — this is directly from a letter — "You take so much abuse. They help me to open up," said Phyllis, choking back tears. "Without them I'd be gone from this earth."

There are other quotes here as well that I could be using from other people who have used this centre for the last 10 years. Why don't you do something immediately so that at least the centre can stay open for this Christmas, so that the people can have their Christmas party, so that they can have their Christmas concert, so that they can exchange gifts? This is the only home for these people. This is not something to look into. This is something to do something about and to do it today.

Hon Mrs Witmer: I need to stress one more time that this was a decision that was made by the board of Kingston Friendship Homes.

Interjection.

Hon Mrs Witmer: The Ministry of Health is still providing the same amount of funding to the Kingston Friendship Homes. In fact the organization received an additional \$200,000 through our community investment fund.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Member for Durham East, your help is not needed and you're in the wrong seat again. Member for Kingston and The Islands, you must come to order. You must give the minister an opportunity to answer the question.

Hon Mrs Witmer: The role of the Ministry of Health is to ensure that the appropriate services are provided to the community. We are confident that this is the case and in this situation it was the board that made the decision because they felt there was an overlap in the services being provided in the community.

ONTARIO LOTTERY CORP

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): My question is for the Minister of Northern Development and Mines and the Chair of the Management Board. You will know that in Sault Ste Marie the Ontario Lottery Corp is one of the major industrial foundation blocks upon which the economy of our whole area thrives, and that it's under attack at the moment by your government and your wont to privatize everything that moves.

Your colleague the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism has a report on his table that would give you and me and others who have responsibility for giving leadership around economic stability for communities like Sault Ste Marie in the north the information we need to make some decisions about where we go and what we do, and whether the decision to privatize the lottery corporation is a good one in the first place.

Would you ask your colleague to give you that report so you and I can share it, or to table it here so those who are responsible in Sault Ste Marie for the future of all the people who call Sault Ste Marie home would have access to that and be able to make appropriate decisions and plan for their future?

Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Northern Development and Mines): I appreciate the question from the member of the third party. As he is well aware, I believe the mayor of Sault Ste Marie has had discussions with the Minister of Economic Development and his staff. I appreciate the openness of his offer, that he concedes there might be some good news in privatization and allowing the private sector to get involved with the Ontario Lottery Corp. I appreciate his concern for the future of Sault Ste Marie. I can assure him I've been talking to the minister and also to the mayor and to the local officials.

Mr Martin: We have never refused to be partner in any exercise that would concern the future of our commu-

nity. The only thing is, we are short of the information we need. You've got an advantage. You've got some information that obviously indicates what's in the best interest of the corporation and your government and hopefully our community. All we want is access to that information so we can work with you to do what's in the best interests of the people who work at the lottery corporation, who work in Sault Ste Marie and who work throughout Algoma.

As I said before, the lottery corporation was seen when it was moved to the Sault as our first opportunity to get into the new economy, the new telecommunications industry that's unfolding out there. If you take it away, if you diminish it in any serious way, you take that away from us. Will you get that report and share it with us so that together we can make decisions that are in the best interests of Sault Ste Marie and Algoma?

Hon Mr Hodgson: I appreciate the question from the member of the third party. It's our intention as a government to work with the city of Sault Ste Marie, to work with the people of Sault Ste Marie, to work with the Ontario Lottery Corp, not only to improve the lottery corporation itself but also to improve Sault Ste Marie and the economic opportunities there.

Just recently, the heritage board met there and we announced a number of exciting projects for Sault Ste Marie. So our past history shows that we are very interested in and concerned about the economic vitality of the city and the region and we will continue to do that.

1500

MILK TESTING

Mrs Brenda Elliott (Guelph): My question today is for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Last week you introduced proposed legislation to transfer the raw milk quality program to the dairy farmers of Ontario. The constituents in Guelph and across this province are concerned about the health quality issues of raw milk testing and they're also concerned about the ongoing issues of giving a non-governmental organization a responsibility like this. I would like some further information on this and assurances about how the quality of milk will be protected for our consumers.

Hon Noble Villeneuve (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, minister responsible for francophone affairs): I am pleased to answer my honourable friend from Guelph. Yes, last week I was very pleased to introduce Bill 170, An Act to amend the Milk Act, in order to meet the needs and to meet the deal that had been done between the dairy farmers of Ontario and the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. OMAFRA will be supporting the dairy farmers of Ontario to the tune of \$300,000 a year for the next four years to assist them in transferring the responsibilities.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): Why did it take until last week when it was announced last spring? You introduced it.

Hon Mr Villeneuve: I am always concerned when I hear the third party. Do you know what they did in 1993?

They cut by two thirds the inspectors in the raw milk area and now they're trying to preach to us. Ladies and gentlemen of the third party, please look at your record before you look at ours.

PETITIONS

EDUCATION REFORM

Mr John C. Cleary (Cornwall): "Whereas the government of Ontario has not listened to the public with respect to Bill 160; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario has chosen to overtly deceive the people of Ontario as to the true objectives of Bill 160; and

"Whereas we, the people, believe that no government has a mandate to act in isolation of the wishes of the electorate of this province and we have lost confidence in this government;

"We, the undersigned electors of Ontario, petition the Lieutenant Governor to dissolve the Legislature and call a general election."

ABORTION

Mr Bob Wood (London South): I have a petition signed by 34 people.

"Whereas the Ontario health system is overburdened and unnecessary spending must be cut; and

"Whereas pregnancy is not a disease, injury or illness and abortions are not therapeutic procedures; and

"Whereas the vast majority of abortions are done for reasons of convenience or finance; and

"Whereas the province has the exclusive authority to determine what services will be insured; and

"Whereas the Canada Health Act does not require funding for elective procedures; and

"Whereas there is mounting evidence that abortion is in fact hazardous to women's health; and

"Whereas Ontario taxpayers funded over 45,000 abortions in 1993, at an estimated cost of \$25 million;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to cease providing any taxpayers' dollars for the performance of abortions."

CHIROPRACTIC HEALTH CARE

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): I have a petition to the Ontario Legislature.

"Whereas the Ministry of Health has recently strengthened its reputation as the Ministry of Medicine through its \$1.7-billion, three-year agreement with the OMA; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government is restricting access to alternative cost-saving treatments for patients of the province; and

"Whereas two recent reports commissioned by the Ministry of Health called for increased OHIP funding to

improve patient access to chiropractic services on the grounds of safety, effectiveness and cost-effectiveness; and

"Whereas over one million Ontario adults now use chiropractic services annually, increasingly those with higher incomes, because of the cost barrier caused by government underfunding; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government has shown blatant disregard for the needs of the citizens of Ontario in restricting funding for chiropractic services;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to recognize the contribution made by chiropractors to the good health of the people of Ontario, to recognize the taxpayer dollars saved by the use of low-cost preventive care such as that provided by chiropractors and to recognize that to restrict funding for chiropractic health care only serves to limit access to a needed health care service."

I affix my signature.

BEAR HUNTING

Mr Jack Carroll (Chatham-Kent): To the Parliament of Ontario, a petition from members of the Kent Conservation Club:

"Whereas black bear populations in Ontario are healthy with between 75,000 and 100,000 animals and their numbers are stable or increasing in many areas of the province; and

"Whereas black bear hunting is enjoyed by over 20,000 hunters annually in Ontario and black bears are a well-managed renewable resource; and

"Whereas bear hunting replaces natural mortality and reduces cannibalism among bears; and

"Whereas hunting regulations are based on sustained yield principles and all forms of hunting are needed to optimize the socioeconomic benefits associated with hunting; and

"Whereas the value of the spring bear hunt to tourist operators in northern Ontario is \$30 million annually, generating about 500 person-years of employment; and

"Whereas animal rights activists have launched a campaign of misinformation and emotional rhetoric to ban bear hunting and to end our hunting heritage in Ontario, ignoring the enormous impact this would have on the people of Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ontario government protect our hunting heritage and continue to support all current forms of black bear hunting."

HOSPITAL FINANCING

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. I mention that this is an ongoing petition.

"Whereas Ontarians are gravely concerned with the historic \$1.3-billion cut to base funding of hospitals; and

"Whereas Ontarians feel that health services are suffering; and

"Whereas the government is reducing hospital funding and not reinvesting millions of dollars into the communities that they are being taken from;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to call on the Conservative government to stop the cuts to base funding for hospitals across Ontario and to ensure that community services are in place before the removal of hospital services. The Conservative government must fund hospitals with a funding formula that reflects demographic and regional needs. The Conservative government must ensure that health services are available, including emergency and urgent care, to all Ontarians."

I am very pleased to sign this petition.

BEAR HUNTING

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke-Rexdale): I have a petition to the Legislature of Ontario.

"Whereas black bears are hunted in the spring just after emerging from hibernation; and

"Whereas some of the bears are females with nursing young; and

"Whereas it is extremely difficult to differentiate between a female and a male bear; and

"Whereas the black bear has the lowest reproduction rate of any land mammal on the continent; and

"Whereas the survival rate of bear cubs in the wild is less than 50%; and

"Whereas 27% of black bears killed in the spring are females; and

"Whereas the population of black bears is extrapolated and may be very inaccurate; and

"Whereas the reporting of black bears killed is voluntary for residents; and

"Whereas the reporting of nuisance bears killed is not required; and

"Whereas 61% of Ontarians want the spring hunt stopped or restricted;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ontario government, in its efforts to protect and preserve the present black bear population, introduce a complete ban on hunting, trapping and killing of black bears during the spring season."

There are about 150 signatures from my riding. I affix my signature to it.

EDUCATION REFORM

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): "Whereas Bill 160 originally maintained principals and vice-principals would remain as members of the teachers' federations; and

"Whereas the proposed amendments were introduced after the hearings had been completed; and

"Whereas the proposed amendments will seriously destabilize the education system, causing unnecessary stress on our established school teams;

"We, the undersigned electors of Ontario, petition the Lieutenant Governor to withdraw those sections of Bill 160 which will impact the current status of principals and vice-principals as members of the teachers' federations."

I affix my signature.

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton North): I have a petition here which is with respect to the withdrawal or repeal of Bill 160. There are only a couple of people from my own riding, but I'd be happy to present it on their behalf. I'm still puzzled as to why I got this because it clearly states on the bottom that the original is to be presented to the East End Parent Network, care of Howard Hampton, leader of the Ontario NDP. Some of these people must have thought that I switched parties, so I will present —

The Deputy Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Member for Brampton North, you have to read the petition.

1510

HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Thunder Bay and district are suffering from serious deterioration in our health care system because of the closing of hospital beds before community services and long-term-care facilities are available;

"We, the undersigned, therefore petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make it an urgent priority to provide more long-term-care services in the home and to provide a sufficient number of long-term-care institutional beds and staff in order to restore the standards of health care to an acceptable level."

This is signed by a number of people very concerned about that situation in our region and sent to me by the Patients' Rights Association. I'm very pleased to sign my name to this petition.

Mr Toby Barrett (Norfolk): I have been receiving thousands of signatures on petitions from hospitals that serve people in the eastern portion of my riding. This petition is from the Haldimand War Memorial Hospital in Dunnville.

"We, the undersigned, strongly oppose the recommendations made by the district health council July 1997 report about health care in our community.

"We object to less acute care beds at Haldimand War Memorial Hospital; a limit of three days for patients at Haldimand War Memorial Hospital; possible downgrading of the emergency department at Haldimand War Memorial Hospital; the district health council's involvement in selecting hospital board members; one regional corporation for the three Haldimand-Norfolk hospitals; and unequal budget reductions for all three Haldimand-Norfolk hospitals."

I hereby affix my signature to this petition.

EDUCATION REFORM

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William): I have a petition of non-confidence.

"Whereas the government of Ontario has not listened to the public on Bill 160; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario has chosen to overtly deceive the people of Ontario as to the true objectives of Bill 160; and

"Whereas we, the people, believe that no government has a mandate to act in isolation of the wishes of the electorate of this province and we have lost confidence in the government,

"We, the undersigned electors of Ontario, petition the Lieutenant Governor to dissolve the Legislature and call a general election forthwith."

This sentiment has been shared by several hundred constituents across Ontario, and I affix my signature in agreement.

EDUCATION FINANCING

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): It's a pleasure to present a petition to the House today.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario government wants to take up to an additional billion dollars out of the educational system this year and every year; and

"Whereas the Ontario government will remove up to 10,000 teachers from classrooms across the province; and

"Whereas the Ontario government will have unbridled regulatory powers over public education; and

"Whereas the Ontario government wishes to remove the right to negotiate student learning conditions; and

"Whereas the Ontario government proposes to undermine shared decision-making among students, parents, educators, trustees and taxpayers,

"We, the undersigned Ontario residents, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to withdraw Bill 160."

I'm presenting this on behalf of Bonnie Tennant and Jessica Ferguson and a number of other constituents, in full knowledge that the bill has passed.

ABORTION

Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming): To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario health care system is overburdened and unnecessary spending must be cut; and

"Whereas pregnancy is not a disease, injury or illness and abortions are not therapeutic procedures; and

"Whereas the vast majority of abortions are done for reasons of convenience or finance; and

"Whereas the province of Ontario has exclusive authority to determine what services will be insured; and

"Whereas the Canada Health Act does not require funding for elective procedures; and

"Whereas there is mounting evidence that abortion is in fact hazardous to women's health; and

"Whereas Ontario taxpayers funded over 45,000 abortions in 1993 at an estimated cost of \$25 million,

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to cease from providing any taxpayers' dollars for the performance of abortions."

ANTI-TOBACCO LEGISLATION

Mr Toby Barrett (Norfolk): I have received further petitions concerning the rights of tobacco farmers and retailers, close to 10,000 signatures now.

"We, the undersigned citizens of Ontario, draw attention of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to the following:

"Whereas the freedom of choice regarding tobacco smoking in a privately owned business, as previously allowed, is being unfairly curtailed by the strict and unnecessary enforcement of the regulatory tobacco act, as passed by the previous provincial government, in the counties of Brant, Elgin, Oxford and the riding of Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, request that the province of Ontario amend or revise the regulatory tobacco act in the following ways:

"That within the tobacco-producing counties of Brant, Elgin, Oxford, and the riding of Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant, the policing of the regulated no-smoking protocols be left up to the municipalities to enforce as they see fit and that this also apply to any municipality, county or riding within Ontario where tobacco production or processing is an economic factor;

"That privately owned businesses who produce or process tobacco and/or whose businesses service or supply the tobacco industry and reside within the designated regions be exempt from the posting of the regulated no-smoking signs and be allowed proprietary discretion on tobacco use within their establishment; and

"That the use of legal tobacco products, as used by adults, be allowed in businesses who produce or process tobacco and/or whose business services or supplies the tobacco industry within the designated regions without the fear of penalty or fines to their clients or staff."

I have signed these petitions.

ABORTION

Mr Pat Hoy (Essex-Kent): I have a petition that's signed by literally hundreds of people from communities like Merlin, Tilbury, Charing Cross and all across the riding.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario health system is overburdened and unnecessary spending must be cut; and

"Whereas pregnancy is not a disease, injury or illness and abortions are not therapeutic procedures; and

"Whereas the vast majority of abortions are done for reasons of convenience or finance; and

"Whereas the province of Ontario has the exclusive authority to determine what services will be insured; and

"Whereas the Canada Health Act does not require funding for elective procedures; and

"Whereas there is mounting evidence that abortion is in fact hazardous to women's health; and

"Whereas Ontario taxpayers funded over 45,000 abortions in 1993 at an estimated cost of \$25 million;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to cease from providing any taxpayers' dollars for the performance of abortions."

I affix my name to this petition.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Hon Robert W. Runciman (Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services): I'm seeking unanimous consent to call orders 44 to 53 inclusively and to have them debated together.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Is there unanimous consent?

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): Before we give unanimous consent to that, we also understand that there was some discussion about having the time remaining split three ways.

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed to as well? Agreed.

CONCURRENCE IN SUPPLY

Hon Robert W. Runciman (Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services): I move concurrence in supply for the following ministries and offices:

Ministry of Health

Office of the Premier

Ministry of Natural Resources

Ministry of the Attorney General

Ministry of Intergovernmental Affairs

Ministry of Education and Training

Ministry of Transportation

Ministry of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation

Ministry of Environment and Energy

Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs

1520

Following my comments, the government will be splitting its time between the member for Northumberland, the member for Muskoka-Georgian Bay and the member for Brampton North.

The orders for concurrence give us an excellent opportunity to highlight the significant achievements made by ministries this fiscal year. As all members know, we did not inherit an \$11.2-billion deficit in 1995 because we didn't tax enough; we inherited an \$11.2-billion deficit because we spent significantly more than we should have been spending. The estimates illustrate the work ministries have done to rein in uncontrolled spending and to focus on the core businesses of government, to reduce red tape and overregulation, to improve the business climate in Ontario and to encourage investment.

The policies of this government have helped to create over 270,000 private sector jobs since June 1995. Three quarters of all the private sector jobs in Canada over that period of time have been created in Ontario.

In the second quarter of 1997, the Ontario GDP rose by 7.2%; that's 2.3% higher than the Canadian average and, I believe, the highest growth rate in terms of that quarter in North America.

Over 250,000 Ontarians, a quarter of a million, have broken the cycle of welfare dependency since this government assumed office in June 1995.

Total health care spending: The commitment by this government for 1997 will be \$18.5 billion, the highest spending in health care in this province's history. I'm sure my colleagues will have further examples of the great work being done by ministries in this government.

Mr Bill Grimmitt (Muskoka-Georgian Bay): I'm certainly pleased today to join in the debate on the concur-rences in supply, which of course involve the estimates of the province of Ontario. In doing so, I wish to highlight a number of ministries that were spoken about and also reflect on my experience on the estimates committee, which I certainly enjoyed and which, as the minister has said, was a reflection in many cases of a change in the management style in Ontario which has occurred since we were elected as the government.

The estimates of our government reflect the efforts of the different departments in this government to bring themselves in line with our ambitious and critical plan to restore fiscal balance and fiscal prudence to the government of Ontario. I think throughout the estimates process we saw, as the ministers were defending the estimates and speaking to the questions that were presented to them, that we have a very prudent approach to planning in each of the ministries and there is a strong discipline within those ministries that is reflected in the estimates and in the planning of the fiscal policies for each ministry.

In commenting on that fiscal prudence, I thought I'd go back to the document with which we planned the approach of each ministry and with which we planned the overall approach to fiscal prudence, and that was the Common Sense Revolution on which we ran in the 1995 election.

I thought I'd deal first with page 7, where we talked about "Protecting Priority Services." This is particularly important when you look at the estimates for the Ministry of Health. We said during the introduction of the Common Sense Revolution and during the election when we ran on this platform that we would be protecting the budget of the health ministry, that it was the number one priority of the people of Ontario.

When the minister came to the standing committee on estimates, it was very clear that not only had we protected the budget of the health ministry but in fact we have enhanced that budget. We have enhanced that budget by increasing the overall expenditures in the health ministry from around \$17.3 billion, as I recall, at the time of the 1995 election to in excess of \$18 billion when you take into account the capital moneys being invested in the hospital restructuring process.

Also, in the Ministry of Education, when I reflect back on our campaign, right from the outset we indicated quite clearly that we felt — and I have been very consistent in my discussions with my constituents in the riding of Muskoka-Georgian Bay — when we talk about education spending, in trying to restore fiscal balance and a balanced budget to Ontario, that aside from health, all of the other ministries had to be looked at, that there were savings to be found through efficiencies, that there were savings to be found in the Ministry of Education, that we would be very careful in finding savings within that ministry and that we would not endanger the classroom, which is critical to the health of the Ontario economy and to the future of all the young people in this province.

As I reflect back on the questions that came up in the estimates committee to the Minister of Education, he was very thorough in explaining that in the ministry's estimates great care has been taken to protect the classroom while still keeping the ministry in line with the general fiscal plan of the government to balance the budget by the year 2000.

I think it is also worth stating that because we are keeping in line with our fiscal plan, and in fact, as the Minister of Finance has stated on a number of occasions, it appears that we may be ahead of our fiscal plan even for this year, that allows us to take on some projects in all these ministries that are very important to Ontarians, and I think it also has restored a feeling of confidence to the economy of Ontario. I'd just like to highlight some of the areas in which the economy appears to be doing well.

In the second quarter for 1997, the April to June period, Ontario recorded another strong quarter of economic growth, with real gross domestic product increasing by 7.2% in annualized rates. This followed a 6.8% increase in GDP in the first quarter. Growth was stronger than the national gain of 4.9% in that second quarter, and that is yet another indication that the Ontario economy is leading the Canadian economy, and that is of great benefit not only to Ontario but to the whole national economy.

For that reason and for other reasons, I'm sure, that relate to the federal government's fiscal prudence as well, the whole Canadian economy showed very strong growth in the third quarter, with real gross domestic product at factor cost rising 4.8%, at annual rates, following a gain of 5.1% in the second quarter and 3.8% in the first quarter. Nearly half of the rise in gross domestic product in the third quarter in the national economy was concentrated in manufacturing and wholesale trade, very important aspects of the Ontario economy. The output also rose in mining, construction, transportation, storage and communications, retail trade and financial services.

For the Ontario economy, the forecasts in the private sector are very strong for the balance of 1997 and for next year. Private sector economists are becoming increasingly optimistic that the Ontario economy will accelerate in 1997 and remain strong throughout 1998. The average private sector forecast for Ontario real GDP growth is 4.4% in 1997 and 4.2% in 1998. All private sector forecasters expect Ontario to grow faster than the Canadian

average in 1997 and 1998. Most private forecasters expect Ontario and Alberta to have the fastest growing economies in 1997.

As a couple of examples, the Bank of Montreal has said, "Ontario's economy became red hot in 1997 and is likely to remain so through 1998, growing at a 5% pace in both years." Scotiabank has said: "Ontario's economic engine is moving into higher gear. While exports will benefit from solid US activity, the domestic economy also is revving up." The International Monetary Fund has forecast that Canada will lead all industrialized nations in economic growth, with real output rising 3.7% in 1997 and 3.5% in 1998.

1530

Much of the growth in the economy has to do with the creation of new jobs and new spending that's generated from those jobs. In November, Ontario's private sector employment continued to do well and we saw 13,000 jobs generated in November. Ontario youth employment was up by 4,300 jobs in the month of November.

The help wanted index, which records the newspaper ads for jobs throughout the province continued to climb. It was up by 0.8% in November, and that's up 24.3%, reaching its highest level since October 1990.

Another important indicator that there is more confidence in the economy has to do with the intentions of employing firms to hire more employees. A Manpower Temporary Services employment survey showed that 14% of firms were expecting to raise employment levels in the first quarter of 1998. That certainly is a very welcome result from a survey and one that is of great importance to the families and especially the young people who are eligible for employment in my riding of Muskoka-Georgian Bay.

Further indicating optimism in the economy, a recent Angus Reid poll showed that 51% of Ontario residents fully expect the Ontario economy to improve in the coming year. Confidence has been rising steadily in Ontario since mid-1996, and this survey marks the highest level of Ontario optimism since Angus Reid began tracking this economic indicator.

Ontario retail sales rose 2.8% in the third quarter of 1997, a very important indicator, especially in central Ontario where I reside, where retail sales certainly needed to increase. I'm sure the retailers in my riding will be very pleased to see that information. Department store sales are up 12.5% for the month of October 1997.

A very important indicator for the Golden Horseshoe in Ontario is auto sales and how that spinoff affects the rest of the economy in Ontario. Bolstered by rising consumer confidence and low interest rates, Ontario unit auto sales rose 18.3% in September from the same month a year earlier, so there has been tremendous growth on the already strong auto sales that were in place in 1996.

The Ontario housing market is a major indicator of economic confidence and growth because of the tremendous number of people who are affected in an employment way by the housing market. The 1997 Ontario housing market remains very robust. Over the first 10 months of

1997, all area starts in Ontario are running 29% ahead of last year's pace, which is even stronger than the 20.4% gain that was recorded in Canada as a whole.

Canada Mortgage and Housing Corp has issued a statement that they feel the strong housing market performance in Ontario will continue. I'll just quote from that recent statement: "Ontario's economy has shifted gears from job recovery mode to job growth. Jobs are a key ingredient in boosting housing demand, but combine jobs with affordable mortgage carrying costs, strengthened home resales and moderate inventories of newly completed and unoccupied homes," and they suggest that housing starts should grow further.

Another indicator of the strong housing market is the residential building permit index, which rose tremendously in 1997. Over the first 10 months of this year, the value of residential building permits issued in Ontario rose 36.5% compared to a year ago. Scotiabank has predicted that this strong rise will amount to 32.6% for the whole year, and they have indicated that strong economic tailwinds are boosting activity, especially in Toronto, and housing starts will account for almost 25% of the Canadian total.

The Ontario social assistance caseload fell again in November, 4,411 fewer cases of social assistance in Ontario, so we continue to reduce the number of people dependent on social assistance. Since June 1995, the number of people depending on social assistance has fallen by almost 250,000. That's a decline of 18.6% in people in Ontario dependent on social assistance.

Business investment is also rising. According to Statistics Canada's recent investment intentions survey, Ontario business plans to raise plant and equipment spending by 11.8% in 1997. This follows a 10.2% rise in 1996.

Non-residential building permits are also up. There is a building boom forecast for the Toronto area. Ontario manufacturing shipments are up strongly in 1997, Ontario exports are up strongly in 1997, and Ontario wholesale trade continues the upward trend for the year 1997.

In concluding my remarks, I'll just quote quickly from the well-known firm Dun and Bradstreet on the Ontario economy:

"Ontario businesses are more optimistic than other regions as they enter the fourth quarter of 1997. As our nation's major economic catalyst, Ontario should lead the country into a good close in 1997, particularly for retailers, which in turn will position us well for the new year. Ontario reported sharp gains in sales optimism, significantly above the national figure."

To some extent there are international and national reasons that our economy is doing well, but I think it's also an indication that our fiscal plan and our discipline, which now is throughout our government, is working well. I'll conclude my remarks now and turn it over to other speakers.

Mr Pat Hoy (Essex-Kent): I want to make my remarks with regard to transportation here in Ontario and specifically school bus safety. Members of the House would know that last year, on November 28, this House, by unanimous consent, deemed that my private member's

Bill 78 should be referred to the resources development committee. That is over a year ago now, and as yet that bill has not come forward at that committee.

We continue in my office to receive calls and letters of concern about people who pass school buses when the red lights are flashing. The government did increase the fines for that offence, but as was the case before they increased those fines, people continue to pass school buses with reckless abandon and are jeopardizing the lives of our young people. Over the last 10 years, 11 children have been killed and over 80 injured.

My bill, Bill 78, would have given bus drivers the opportunity to use what is known as vehicle liability, because the current law states, and always has stated, that the bus driver must identify the driver in the offending vehicle. It's almost impossible to identify those drivers.

There was a letter to the Ottawa Citizen in July of this year. The headline is "Bus Safety Law a Farce." Mr Frank Periard of Alexandria, Ontario, wrote:

"I would like to comment on the increased fines, under the new Comprehensive Road Safety Act, for passing a school bus with red lights flashing.

"First I must relate a most hair-raising experience I had while conducting my school run on a main highway.

"As I was approaching to let two students off the bus, I looked in my rear-view mirror to check for any traffic following me. I observed a car coming up at 100 to 200 feet behind me. I also checked for oncoming traffic.

"After making sure it was clear, I then activated the top red flashing lights to warn the car following me that I intended to stop to let students off the bus. After completing my stop, I activated the flashing stop arm. Before opening the doors I once again looked in my rear-view mirrors to make sure everything was clear.

"As I opened the doors to let the students off, the nitwit zoomed past on the right soft shoulder. If the students had stepped out a second earlier, both would have been killed on the spot. I just had time to stop the kids and take the licence number of the car.

"I was so stunned that I was nervous just thinking of what would have happened to those two young people.

1540

"I went to the first OPP detachment to report this incident. The officer was very understanding of what could have been a tragic and unfortunate situation, but said nothing could be done unless I could identify the driver. Under these terrifying circumstances, I did not see the driver; I simply did not have the time.

"Ontario Transportation Minister Al Palladini makes a big issue of raising the fines for offenders and it looks good to the voters.

"But I say to the minister that the new law is not worth the paper it's written on. You can raise the fines up to \$100,000 if you want, but you cannot make it stick.

"You can give parking tickets without identifying the driver by photo-radar but you can't convict serious offenders as described in my incident.

"In the next school term, drivers will be issued a form to fill out when an infraction is committed against a school

bus. One question on the form will be: 'Can you identify the driver?' Think of the money that will be spent on making up these reports, and for what purpose?

"It's a real farce and a real shame to think that people we elect to protect us and our children make stupid laws, such as this one.

"I certainly hope that the transportation minister reconsiders his new law and takes this question out of the report form, because every student who is killed and the driver gets away scot-free, I and thousands of bus driver all over Ontario will hold him totally responsible for their deaths.

"Maybe parents, after reading this letter, will do something about this senseless law."

It's exactly what Bill 78 would do. It would answer the question of identifying a vehicle in those cases when we cannot identify the driver of the same vehicle. Bill 78 would not ticket both the driver and the vehicle. It's either one or the other. Clearly, the law is flawed. There is no mechanism for conviction.

As well, from the Guelph Mercury there's a headline banner: "School Bus Driver Sees Red."

"Pat Sanvido is on a bit of a crusade.

"The Ariss woman drives a school bus, and she's tired of motorists disregarding the law and passing her bus when the lights are flashing and the stop bar on the side of the bus is extended.

"I'm going to make the public aware of this, no matter what it takes," she said.

"This past week, Sanvido contacted various media outlets, and the Guelph police service also issued a reminder after Sanvido contacted them."

We know from other press stories that the police have gone out and said to the public that this is a dangerous circumstance. You're putting the lives of very young children all the way up through secondary school age at risk when you pass school buses. Continually, my office hears from school bus drivers who say that the driving public is not terribly influenced by the government's increase in fines. It is a moot point if one cannot make convictions.

There was also an editorial in the Guelph Mercury headlined, "Drivers Who Pass School Buses Illegally Should Lose Licences." I'm not advocating that, but this is what some people think should be brought about to stop people from passing illegally. It goes on to say, "Yesterday we asked: Should people lose licences for passing school buses illegally?"

One gentleman said, "Yes, of course they should.... I've been driving for over 60 years, from vehicles with tracks on them to 34-wheelers. And if people are on the road that don't know the rules, get them off, permanently. They are potential killers."

Another response was, "Yes, I believe people who pass school buses illegally should lose their licences."

I remind the House that that is not what Bill 78 would do and it's not what I advocate, but some people think the law should go even further than what either the minister has suggested by raising fines or by what I am saying, which is, let's have a mechanism to attach those fines

under what is known as vehicle liability if we cannot identify the driver.

I urge the government to keep Bill 78 alive. We're nearing the end of this session. It has been over a year since it was deemed to go to the resources development committee. There are many people who would like to come forward and speak to the bill and show the soundness of that very same bill.

I'd also like to address the new Minister of Health, Elizabeth Witmer, from a letter I wrote to her:

"Dear Minister:

"I wrote to your predecessor on September 10, 1997, requesting reconsideration of the decision to amalgamate Ontario's 33 district health councils to only 16 large councils. To date, I have not had a reply from Mr Wilson, but in view of the reallocation of responsibilities, I'm enclosing a copy for your response.

"I would also like to take this opportunity to raise other urgent issues. Health services are a major concern in my riding. In addition to a serious problem of medical underservicing, citizens are facing the extreme turmoil of a restructured district health council, the closure of one of Chatham's two hospitals and the downloading of the responsibility for public health units to municipalities.

"Physicians and residents are also concerned about the lack of support services in the community for patients who are being released from hospital earlier and sicker because of government cuts to hospital spending.

"In Kent county the mortality rate from heart and stroke is 64% above the provincial average, while Essex county is 20% above the average. Kent county has the highest rate of suicide in Ontario. Cancer rates are also high. Smog blown in from the United States and heated in the warm sun of southwestern Ontario is a serious problem in Essex and Kent counties.

"In the heart of Kent agricultural land, it has been reported that the village of Merlin records 932 hours of smog above 50 parts per billion. Merlin's top reading last year was 125 ppb, one of the highest in Ontario. Ozone values from 50 to 80 parts per billion represent moderate air quality and are considered a risk to people with heart or lung disorders. Readings higher than 80 cause greater irritation and warnings are issued for the people at that level.

"These factors contribute to a greater health risk for residents of Essex-Kent and puts greater stress on available health care resources. Specialized public health programs are required to deal with these unique circumstances. Indeed, we see public health programs downloaded to municipalities, along with ambulance services, social housing and transportation, without any guarantee there will be enough local dollars available to continue funding for public health programs. This could be of grave circumstances to Essex-Kent."

That, in part, is what I've written to the minister. Clearly the people of Essex-Kent deserve answers to some of these situations. We have a unique situation perhaps in regard to the fact that some of our health-related statistics are very high.

If public health programs have to compete with other services for local funding, it will certainly decrease the availability of crucial public health and health promotion programs. Undermining prevention, protection and promotion programs for short-term savings will result in increased health care costs in the long run. "You can pay me now or pay me later," as they say.

Now we're starting to see the results of a wrong-headed approach. I met with the Kent-Chatham Health Unit personnel this week and I was disturbed to learn about recent decisions of the Chatham-Kent transition team pertaining to public health. There are plans to change the makeup of the board, downsize the health unit and reduce the role of the medical health officer.

Potable water is a problem in some areas.

The list of concerns about public health is great in Kent and great across Ontario, and I urge the government to respond to these very serious questions put forth by constituents through myself and here in the Legislature.

1550

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): I'm glad to have the opportunity to join in this debate, a debate which, as I understand it, is on concurrence and supply of various ministries, including the Office of the Premier. I say that because people who may be watching this debate might wonder what exactly it is that we are debating this afternoon. Listening to the member for Essex-Kent, he chose to focus the majority of his comments in the area of transportation, although he touched on health care and some other concerns, and those are both ministries that of course are dealt with in the motion that's in front of us.

I was a bit puzzled, in listening to the member for Muskoka-Georgian Bay, who is one of the members from the government side who spoke so far on this debate, that he spent virtually all of his time talking about the economic record of the Mike Harris government. I went back and forth just to make sure I had this correct. It sounded more like a budget speech that he was engaged in, and I looked to see whether the Minister of Finance was here — no, he's not there; whether the Minister of Economic Development was here, given that he talked about jobs and the economy — no, he's not here. So the only conclusion I could come to in listening to him, because I understand the wide-ranging nature of the debate on concurrences, is that he was making the point that all of these things are linked.

I found that interesting because we on this side of the House get up from time to time and we'll talk about the link a particular bill has to the overall agenda of the Mike Harris government, and members opposite, from the government side, will harangue us and say: "What are you talking about that for? Why aren't you talking about Bill so-and-so?" I found it really interesting to listen to the member for Muskoka-Georgian Bay, particularly as he recounted today his view of the wonders that have come to this province as a result of the Mike Harris government.

Mr Garry J. Guzzo (Ottawa-Rideau): He's a lawyer.

Mr Silipo: "He's a lawyer," one of the members opposite says, and I suppose I'm supposed to read in that, "So am I," and therefore there's somehow some link.

Interjection.

Mr Silipo: No, I was quite happy and I didn't object to his doing that. I just wanted for the record to make that notation, because I'm always happy to hear government members try to defend what they're doing. In fact, the more they are willing to make the connections for us and for the people of the province between one area of policy and another, the easier it will be for people across the province to understand what the Mike Harris revolution is all about.

We have in front of us concurrences for some very important ministries which represent some very important policy directions this government has chosen to take. Look at the very first one that's in front of us: concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Health. Do we agree or do we not agree with what is happening through the Ministry of Health and what the government is doing?

Obviously we in the New Democratic Party have on more than one occasion said very clearly, "No, we don't agree with what the government is doing in the area of health care." We don't agree with simply, holus-bolus, shutting down hospital after hospital without any kind of sensible plan for what is going to replace those hospitals, without any kind of sensible plan for how you develop a whole series of services, from community-based services right through and including hospital services, before you start shutting down hospitals. We don't agree with that kind of holus-bolus approach.

It's been interesting to see the government on that issue try to come in and out of the debate at times when it suited them to say, "We're not the ones making decisions about the closing of hospitals," and then when it suited their political agenda to step right in, both feet first, and say, "Yes, we will take responsibility here or there for what is going on," especially when they were able to come in and intervene and actually change some of the decisions around what the Health Services Restructuring Commission was looking at doing or had originally recommended.

All that is to say, when we look at this whole question of health care, which obviously has to be and continues to be one of the fundamental, important issues for the people of this province, that yes, it's important that we make some changes in the way health care is provided; and yes, that very well will mean in certain parts of the province that you need to look at whether we have the right mix of hospitals and other community kinds of care available. But you do that in a planned way. You do that in a way that involves taking into account first and foremost the interests of the local communities. You don't do it by simply coming in and saying, "How many hospitals can we close today?" before you've got any sense of what the alternative plan is.

Similarly, one of the other ministries here in front of us today is the Ministry of Education and Training. How could we have a debate on concurrences without touching upon the kind of devastation we have seen so far and are

likely to continue to see by the Mike Harris government in the area of education?

The whole debate we've had on Bill 160, which I know, as far as the Minister of Education is concerned, he would like very much to forget or put behind him, is going to continue. Let me say very clearly to members opposite that it is going to continue, and in spades, not because we in the New Democratic Party caucus have to stir things up but simply because we are reflecting and bringing to the floor of this Legislature the very strong feelings that we know exist. You know as well as I, Madam Speaker, that they exist right across this province, whether it's here in ridings like mine and yours in the city of Toronto or whether it's in ridings across the province, whether it's communities like Riverdale or Dovercourt or the Premier's own home base of North Bay and many, many others across the province.

What parents and citizens are saying to us is: "We are not prepared to see our education system gutted. We are not prepared to see our school system destroyed simply so that Mike Harris can find the money to maintain the one overarching promise he seems to be intent on maintaining, and that is the 30% income tax cut."

When you ask people, "Do you want to have a tax cut?" of course most people, I think, would like to have a tax cut. But when you talk to people about what that means in real terms, I am certainly finding more and more people who are saying, "The \$3 or \$4 a week that I get in my pocket isn't worth at the end of the day the price of destroying our school system."

That's what is going to happen. That's what we know is going to take place. We've seen it already as a result of the impact of the hundreds of millions of dollars that have been cut by this government from the budgets of school boards across the province. We will see it in spades with the cuts that are yet to come, unless the Premier reverses the position he finally had to admit to when our leader, Howard Hampton, released the draft copy of the Deputy Minister of Education's contract, which showed that part of the task, part of the direction she was being given for the next year, was to come up with a plan to take out of the system of education another \$667 million.

I remember the debate on Bill 160 back at second reading stage when we would make that point and say, "The real agenda of the Mike Harris government is to cut another \$1 billion out of the system," and government members would stand up and say or holler from their seats, "Where do you get that idea?" and we would point out that it was exactly on the basis of statements made by the former Minister of Education about a year and a half ago now, a year and some months ago. They would say: "No, no. That's not true. We're not going to do that."

I can only imagine the look on the faces of many of the backbench members of the Tory caucus when they saw in the evening news the Premier of the province having to admit that yes, the cutting of another \$600 million or \$700 million was really very much part of the government's plan. I can just imagine the looks on their faces and the sense of fear in their stomachs as they said: "My God,

they didn't tell us that. My God, they didn't tell us that this was what we were going to be doing. We've been saying to people all along that we're not going to do that."

Why is that the case? It's because we have in this government, to a degree we have never seen before, an incredible concentration of power in the hands of the Premier and the Premier's office. I note with great interest that the Premier's office is one of the items before us in terms of voting concurrence. So we don't agree that the Premier's office should continue to spend more money now than was spent there in recent memory, because that's what the numbers show.

That is very much in keeping with the approach Mike Harris and the handful of people around him have taken, which is that they are going to centrally and masterfully try to control not only the public agenda but they are going to try to control the Tory caucus as they try to drive through their revolution, as they try to drive through an agenda which is based on cuts to our health care system, on gutting our school system, on not putting a real emphasis on creating jobs in this province.

I hear the members opposite talk about how things have improved. Of course, things have improved and we're happy that things have improved. But when you have the high level of unemployment we have now, around 9% of Ontarians being unemployed, when still so many people are having to depend on social assistance, and we know that many have left the rolls not because they have found jobs but because they simply don't qualify under the reduced standards this government has set, then we have to continue to point the finger to the Premier's office, to Mike Harris and the three or four people he has around him who are driving this agenda so hard and driving it very much with a view to polarizing public opinion in this province, with an objective of driving very much a Reform-minded agenda and with a view to ensuring that there is in this province a situation in which the gap between those who are rich and well off and the rest of us continues to widen; to ensuring, as they are doing, that all the things that have made Ontario a good place for us to live and work in, all the things that have gone into having this considered by groups like the United Nations as one of the best societies in the world, not only have been put at risk but are being destroyed.

The sense of community, the sense of caring, the sense of understanding, the sense of compassion, the sense of responsibility we have towards our fellow citizens is being destroyed by the actions of Mike Harris and the few people he has around him.

1600

We will see a situation over the next few months where there will be a softening of that position. When we come back after we break at Christmastime we will see, I'm sure, at some time in the spring, whether it's through a new throne speech or however the government tries to do it, an attempt to say: "We've gone through the hard times. Now we can try to soften our image. We can even invest a little bit here and there."

But the fundamental decisions we have made particularly during this year, when we have sat as a Legislature for exorbitant periods of time — and I'm not complaining about the time we have sat. I'm simply saying that to note that what Mike Harris and the three or four people around him have done in this past year particularly has been to bring about some significant changes that I don't think even many of the Tory backbenchers, with all due respect to them as individuals, fully comprehend the implications of.

It will be over the next six months to a year that we will see the full impact of the cuts, for example, to our school system. It will be as a result of those things that maybe the light will go on among more of the Tory backbenchers, as it did among some of their colleagues. We heard from time to time people like the member for Grey-Owen Sound at least express some concerns about where the government was going. We saw finally in this House last week, for the first time, a couple of government members, particularly the member for Oakville South and the member for Wentworth North, have the courage to stand up and vote against their government on one of the important pieces of the download bill.

It's going to take much more of that; it's going to take at the end of the day the kind of understanding that I see is growing across the province every day, that the Mike Harris revolution is something the majority of Ontarians disagree with. I think it's going to be incumbent upon all of us as Ontarians to realize that at some time in the next two years we'll have the opportunity to pass judgement on the Mike Harris government.

That's a challenge to all of us and it's a challenge I put to myself as a member of one of the two opposition parties, to say that we need to embark upon a serious discussion to develop an alternative vision of the Mike Harris view of the world. I believe, from everything I've seen in many years of public life, that while people agree that change is necessary, the kind of change the Mike Harris revolution has brought about is not the kind of change that Ontarians want.

The kind of change we want has to continue to be based on a sense that we want to see a health care system worthy of the name, that we need to have an education system that puts our kids first, not just in a rhetorical sense but in a real way, and that continues to see that creating jobs, particularly for our young people, where there's the highest level of unemployment, becomes a priority in the same way as, if not to a greater extent than, is cutting the deficit a priority for the government.

Certainly we have seen in spades over this last year particularly the attack on the whole democratic notion and the whole democratic sense of how decisions are made, come about as a result of the growing concentration of power in the hands of Mike Harris and a few cronies around him. I think that is another key issue that people across the province are eager for us to address.

I want to just say in closing that I take my responsibilities as a member of the New Democratic Party very seriously in saying to people across this province that we

believe we need and can put together an alternative vision to the Mike Harris view of the world. We understand our challenge over the next little while will be to do that and to engage people in a serious discussion about what that vision might look like, not in a rhetorical way but in a very practical, task-oriented way, so that when some time during the next two years we have a chance to pass judgement on the Mike Harris revolution, we will have in place the ability to go to people and say: "This is what that vision could look like. This is how that vision could be translated into real changes through the legislative process in a way that involves citizens of this province in a way that allows us to recapture that sense of community."

I hope we can bring back to the floor of this Legislature, that sense of community that Mike Harris has tried to destroy but which is still thriving and healthy out there and which it is now our task to pick up and to make sure it gets brought here at Queen's Park into the decision-making process where it belongs.

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): It's certainly a pleasure for me to rise and address the issues of the day and not talk about the doom and gloom that we've recently heard, but talk about some of the good news, the things that have really happened here in Ontario over the last two and a half years.

I'd first like to draw your attention to a quote from the federal industry minister, John Manley. "Ontario's economy is on fire because of the Harris government's tax cuts and renewed consumer confidence." This comes from a Liberal. Granted, it's a federal Liberal, but that's what they're saying from Ottawa that's going on in Ontario.

The article that this came from goes on to say that there's strong export activity from the province, and they add that domestic gains can also be linked to Ontario's cuts to personal income tax — another supporter of what we're doing with our income tax, and that happens to be a Liberal who is supporting that. They're also saying they have more money in their pockets, and therefore they have more money to spend. He winds up the article with a quote again from the Honourable John Manley: "Tax cuts increase domestic consumption."

In this article there's only one area that I tend to disagree with, and that's the fact that there's more money in people's pockets. I would say it's more that it has broken even, because what we have given in income tax cuts, the federal government has increased its federal payroll taxes, and the end result is more of a break-even. However, people in other provinces are experiencing real cuts in their take-home pay. At least with our cut in payroll taxes, people are breaking even. They feel like they have more money in their pockets, mainly because of all the rhetoric we hear from the opposition. I'm sure they wouldn't know they had extra dollars there if it wasn't for the Liberals giving us all that support and talk about the tax cuts, and for that I'm very appreciative.

We are into an economic boom here in Ontario; it's general across the province. As a matter of fact, last Saturday I was in the Northumberland Mall. I parked the

farthest from the mall I've ever had to park. I'm sure I was in a parking spot that no car has ever been in before. The mall was absolutely jammed with people. I was in Cortesis Jewellers store, and the only problem they had in that store was their cash register couldn't take the money fast enough. People were lined up, all kinds of business going on, like they have never seen before until this year. Last year was good, but this year is just so much better. I spent most of that day wandering around the mall apologizing to my Liberal friends for the traffic jam out in front, and for so many people in the mall it was uncomfortable, but they understood.

1610

Friday night before that, I was in Warkworth at a Santa Claus parade and I visited the BackTalk Café, appropriately named. They were telling me that evening they had never had so many in for dinner before. It was a record for them, and this year activity in the restaurant is way up. The weekend before I was in Trenton talking with Craig Desjardins about his bookstore, and sales are up some 20% in that bookstore in Trenton.

The predictions are that this is a record year for retailers. It's really good news. I know it's awfully hard for the opposition to accept that, but it's reality. Being in the Santa Claus parades in Cobourg and Port Hope and Brighton, Warkworth and Bewdley and Campbellford —

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): Were you Santa Claus?

Mr Galt: Yes, I do have one of those outfits and I wear it periodically, but not in the parades.

The stores in these communities have never looked better. They're prosperous and things are really going places.

I should relate to you also that last May I was in Windsor after the budget came out, doing a little bit of a speaking tour about the budget. The biggest complaint from Windsor was a problem they were having there with traffic jams in that community, so I asked them, "Why would you be having traffic jams in Windsor?" Their answer was, because of all the new jobs that have been created in their community and people going to and from work —

Mr Len Wood (Cochrane North): Point of order, Mr Speaker: It's a very interesting discussion, but I don't believe there's a quorum in this House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Would you please check if we have a quorum.

Clerk at the Table (Ms Lisa Freedman): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk at the Table: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Northumberland.

Mr Galt: I was talking about being in Windsor, when I was so rudely interrupted. One of the biggest problems they were telling me about when I was in Windsor was the problem they were having there with traffic jams and I was asking them why they were having so many traffic

jams. It was because of all the new jobs that had been created in Windsor. These were people going to and from work. That was why the traffic was a problem. I'm sure the member for Windsor-Sandwich would appreciate knowing that. Unfortunately she isn't here, but I'm sure she knows about all of the new jobs that have been created in Windsor.

When this happens, the response from the opposition is doom and gloom and all the problems. They never seem to want to recognize what's really going on out there.

The Leader of the Opposition, Dalton Turn-Back-the-Clock McGuinty, really wants to revert back to the Peterson days. He's against tax cuts. I can't understand for the life of me why anybody would be against tax cuts, but Dalton Turn-Back-the-Clock McGuinty is opposed to tax cuts. He doesn't understand that they will actually stimulate the economy. What he stands for is more taxes, and that's pretty hard to believe. When you go back to the Peterson days and see 30-plus tax increases, you can understand where they come from as a party.

Dalton McGuinty also stands for repealing Bill 160. I guess that's because he's opposed to quality education at the best cost. Maybe that's related to the fact that he has a wife who's a teacher; I really don't know.

They want to return to the Liberals of the past, with those 30 tax increases. Over the five years, they actually doubled the budget. They were trying in advance to outspend the NDP and they were almost successful. Where they're coming from, I really don't know, but they want to turn back the clock to the days of spend, borrow and tax.

Then we hear from the member for Scarborough-Agincourt, who stresses the number of unemployed. Rather than looking at it as a glass half full, he wants to look at it as being half empty.

The experts tell us that as the economy improves, more people are coming into the workforce. They are re-entering. Where are they coming from? Well, back in the early 1990s there were so many people unemployed they gave up and went on welfare, so their numbers weren't being counted. Now they know there is work out there and they are re-entering the unemployed, looking for work.

We also have those people who are returning to Ontario, those who left and gave up in the early 1990s. They recognize what's going on in the province and they are moving back to Ontario, back to their home province.

Tax cuts are good. It's good for the taxpayer, it's good for consumers, it's good for business. The proof is, we're leading in Canada in economic growth. Tax revenues are up significantly — that can't be argued — and there is no question that is due to the tax cuts.

It took a while. When I was first involved in the campaign, I had to be convinced, not by my party, not by people in my own circles, but knocking on doors I actually came across two economists who invited me in and explained the whole Laffer curve and how this would occur. There is absolutely no question that the way it was predicted by our party, the way it was predicted by these economists, has fallen in place. It really does work, and

there is no question as you look at the tax revenues that are coming into this province.

Why is Ontario doing so well? There are many reasons Ontario is doing well: We have lower interest rates, we have lower payroll taxes, we have lower income tax and we're going to have in Ontario the lowest income tax across Canada when we get the full 30% rolled in. We've reduced significantly the red tape in this province, and what's even better is that we have scrapped the NDP job-killing labour legislation. That's good news for Ontario and it's good news for Northumberland.

In Northumberland we have a lot of people, a lot of investors, a lot of companies that are interested in relocating and setting up their business, their company, in the county of Northumberland. What I find rather disappointing is that we have to compete with other provinces that have literally unlimited access to federal dollars through employment insurance dollars and transfer dollars that we don't have. We're the only province that does not have an agreement with the federal government on employment insurance transfer dollars for training purposes.

1620

It boils down to the fact that they are using dollars from Ontario, transferred to other provinces by the federal government, to attract business away from Ontario to those provinces, and it's the federal Liberals that have been doing this. The 101 of the 103 MPs, the federal members who represent Ontario, that's what they're doing to help our province. I guess that's typical of Liberals when you really look at it. There's no question Ontario is on the right track. There's no question we have the right policies for economic development and to be able to compete globally.

If you look, recently, in November, there were some 13,000 new jobs created, and 4,300 of those new jobs were for youth employment. Unemployment in the month of November actually dropped 0.1%, from 8.5% to 8.4%. In the last nine months we have created in Ontario 204,000 net new jobs in the private sector. Those represent 63% of the total new jobs that have been created in all of Canada.

I think it's interesting to note that there are jobs out there. There's no question there are many jobs out there. One of the problems we have with our unemployed workforce is they do not have the skills that are required for those jobs being advertised. Let me give you an example: In the Ottawa Valley, which is now being referred to as the Silicon Valley of the north, there are some 3,000 jobs in the computer technology sector. We do not have people with the skills to go into those jobs. It's most unfortunate that our young people have not taken the math required to go into those kinds of computer activities.

I'm told that in this province, when unemployment gets down to the 8% level, companies start looking outside of Ontario to find the right skills. I think that's unfortunate, and it may be a reflection on the kind of training we have in this province.

I'm sure that many in the opposition read the Toronto Star this past weekend and read some of the articles about

the 1,000 young people who were interviewed. These young people were between the ages of 18 and 30. They listed a very large number of jobs in those articles that are unfilled. Why are they unfilled? Because of the lack of skills in our young people to be able to fill those jobs.

Future job growth in this province will relate to three different areas.

The first is information and high technology, and I would think from looking over the last 10 years or so that would be pretty obvious.

The second is health care, and that to me is pretty clear-cut as well, as we look at the large percentage of seniors we have in our province, and certainly it's going to be higher, particularly as the baby-boomers move into the age 65 in another 12 to 15 years or so. I thought it was interesting in an article in the *Globe and Mail* this past summer they were saying that of all the people in the world who have ever reached the age of 65 and over, two thirds of those people are living today. That gives you some indication of the aging of our population and the number of people our health care system is going to be responsible for and have to look after in the future.

The third area that was mentioned is that of leisure industries, and I think it's interesting to note that with the amount of free time that people now have, particularly in retirement, this would be a great area for our young people to get into, and certainly I would think it would be a very enjoyable sector to be involved in. It would be important for guidance departments to be fully aware of this and direct our students accordingly so that when they do get some training in our secondary schools, our colleges and our universities, they will have the kinds of skills being looked for by employers in Ontario.

There's no question that they're going to have to compete in the marketplace in Ontario, and certainly that marketplace, those companies, those organizations, are going to have to deal with a global economy. We can't hide behind trade barriers any longer. We must be prepared to compete globally, and when we compete globally, then there's competition within the province.

New development in any area is a great thermometer on the economy and what's happening in the economy. In Ontario we have one of the strongest new home starts that has been seen for a long time. Why is this happening here in the province and particularly in my riding? The reason is, again, interest rates are low and consumer confidence is up like it has never been before. There are all kinds of indications of confidence of the consumer. People are no longer worried about their jobs like they were a few years ago. They are feeling comfortable that there will be employment in the future. It's also up because of the rebate of the land transfer tax. People are finding it easier because of less tax when they buy a new home.

In Northumberland the construction and new development is up in new homes, up in condominiums and up in retirement complexes. In Cobourg, for example, there is the new Amherst development, some 1,600 homes, and once that is completed and up and running, that will represent to the town of Cobourg some \$3.2 million annually in

tax revenue. Also in Cobourg they have cleaned up the old harbourfront and with the condominiums, it's a very attractive area of that town. In Brighton there's a retirement complex that's booming along with some 800 units. In Campbellford there's another retirement complex going in for some 110 people.

In Northumberland we're no longer seeing the real estate For Sale signs sitting out there for months on end and years on end, but rather we're seeing real estate signs that say Sold. That has been quite a change in the last year or so from what was going on for the last five years, in the early 1990s.

Building permits are up. For example, in Cobourg already they have some 225 building permits. Last year at this time they had 200 and that was way up from the year before. In Hamilton township, which is the township that surrounds Cobourg to the north, their building permits have doubled this year over last year, and last year was up significantly from the year before.

The reason so much development is occurring is that more people are working. Again, as I have mentioned, consumer confidence is up. Consumers have more money to spend, and that is due to the tax cuts, and the conditions of development are certainly very favourable. We have lower interest rates, better working relationships with management and labour like we never had under the NDP government. We have reduced the red tape, we have reduced the barriers to growth, and there are incentives in the Tenant Protection Act to get people out building apartments and condominiums for people to live in. The rent control of the past did not work.

In conclusion, I'm very pleased to report that the reforms we have been carrying out over the last two and a half years are working, and they are working extremely well. This party listened before the election, and we were told very clearly that the status quo was not an option. Since the election, we have also been consulting. It has probably been the most consultative government that this province has ever seen. Never before has a government gone out with three bills in advance of the first reading and walked them around Ontario, consulting with people across this province to find out their opinions. That was before the first reading. It never happened before.

Education reform: With the bills that recently were put through, Bill 160 and the one previous, the Fewer School Boards Act, there was extensive consultation prior to those two bills being brought in.

I have personally been involved for almost two and a half years, well over two years, with environmental regulatory reform. Extensive consultation was carried out with that exercise, and it was rolled out 10 days ago and there was hardly a comment in the paper, because of the consultation that we carried out. We have it worked out with environmentalists. We have it worked out with industry. It's good news for industry and it's good news for the environmentalists, and that's why you didn't see a whole lot of negative comments about that particular rollout in the press. I guess it's pretty hard to get good press when it's good news. It's only great press when you have bad

news, so obviously what we came out with was pretty good news in connection with the environmental regulatory reform.

This province has been making some very tough decisions. This government has been prepared to stand up and make those decisions. We have implemented policy changes to make Ontario a safer, a healthier and a more prosperous province, one that's better to live and work and invest in and one that's better to raise a family in.

1630

Mr Mike Colle (Oakwood): I should mention perhaps the traffic jam in Windsor as a result of all of the ambulances trying to get to an emergency because the emergency department has been closed in Windsor and people are scrambling to find a place to take their loved ones when they're sick. That's why you have traffic jams in Windsor, because of dislocation in the health field.

Just like in my riding of Oakwood, here's a government that's closed down a modern hospital, Northwestern hospital, a state-of-the-art facility. This is the legacy of the Mike Harris government: closing down a hospital that served a community for 50 years, that the community built by raising dollars, \$5 door to door. This government comes along and smashes it down, closes it. Now it's just totally empty. This is what the people in Oakwood think of this government.

One of the first things this government did is it went in there arbitrarily and shut down the construction of the Eglinton subway without consultation. They talked to nobody. They closed it down and they spent \$60 million filling in the hole for the subway. If they had continued to build that subway, it would have been built by now. Talk about jobs; talk about economic opportunity. That subway would have been built today. People would have been going on the Eglinton subway to work, to the airport. That's where they would have been going. This government was so backward, was so negative, it shut down the subway and spent \$60 million shutting it down. That's what the people of Oakwood think of this government.

They also know that this government shut down the only outlet of the MTO issuing licences. The LCBO was shut down by this government because this government only cares about very particular parts of the economy. Their well-to-do friends do very well; they're very happy with this government. But the vast majority of Ontarians are very upset and hurt by this government.

This is a government that is going to close 10 hospitals in Metro. They are going to shut down Women's College Hospital, one of the best women's hospitals in the world. This government is proud of that. And they claim to have listened, consulted? This government consults with a sledgehammer. They go and do their business with a sledgehammer. They're a sledgehammer government that says, "No matter what you say, we're going to do it anyway."

We've just seen this with Bill 160. Teachers and parents and students across this province said, "No, we don't want centralized control of education out of some back room at Queen's Park." They said it over and over again.

The teachers risked their livelihoods going on the picket lines. The parents supported the teachers. This government says: "I don't care. We're right. Our backroom whiz kids are always right. We're going to close down education in this province and we're going to take another \$667 million out of our classrooms."

This government listens? This government takes time to hear people? It doesn't. It does whatever it's told to do by the backroom whiz kids, who are accountable to no one. They do not ever come to this place. You never see them on television. They are hidden behind the walls. As that fine Liberal newspaper, the *Globe and Mail*, said, it's the walls of the Harris Kremlin. That's where they hide. That's where they make their decisions to close hospitals, to take money out of education. That's what this Kremlin bunch is doing. They are basically destroying. They are not consulting; they are not listening. They are on a mission of destruction. They are on a mission of total control.

These are supposed to be Conservatives. How can they sit here and pass bill after bill after bill without ever asking, why is this bigger government better? By the time they get through here, you're going to have one of the biggest governments in the free world, because they are centralizing power. They are centralizing all the decision-making into the little Kremlin that controls everything. This is one of the largest governments that will exist, and it will be controlled by regulation. This is not a government by legislation.

If you look at their bills, they're large enough: Bills 160, 164, all these bills. Then they have a mountain of regulatory powers where some backroom whiz kid can do anything he or she wants in a closed room because these bills give them unprecedented regulatory powers never seen in this province or any province in this country of ours. This is the legacy of this government that is totally arbitrary, that never listened when the people of Metropolitan Toronto said they didn't want the megacity. They did it anyway. Bill 160, they did it anyway.

Now with the casinos, 450,000 people said they don't want neighbourhood casinos in every corner of Metropolitan Toronto. What does this government do? The Premier says: "We don't care what they said in the referendums during the municipal election. We're going to give them casinos anyway because we made this sweetheart deal with our friends in Las Vegas and our backroom boys. We're going to plunk another 40-odd casinos down your throats whether you like it or not."

This is a government that listens? Some 450,000 people voted no to casinos. They don't want them. There are enough casinos. The ones in Niagara Falls and Windsor are fine. We don't want casinos in every neighbourhood sucking money from the most desperate, the most vulnerable. We know who those people will be. Who will get hurt? It will be the kids, because this government is hell-bent on extracting another \$1 billion through casinos so it can pay for its crazy tax cut.

They talk about how great this economy is doing? They're riding the coattails of the lowest interest rates in recent memory. They didn't bring about the low interest

rates. They're riding those coattails. Therefore, we're getting all kinds of business from the United States. We're able to export more; our economy is doing well. They're always ready to take credit and ride the coattails of what the federal government does but never give any credit. They take all the credit for this economy.

I say to you, Mr Speaker, that despite the stupidity of the tax cut, the Ontario economy has bounced back, but it hasn't bounced back for everybody. It has not bounced back for the majority of Ontarians who are still getting fired, who are still getting laid off. I just talked to a person from Maple Leaf Foods who got taken out of her job by the security people. They said, "You've got five minutes to leave." This is the legacy of this government, how people don't have any job security.

You talk about consumer confidence? It's about half a centimetre thick and a mile wide. Consumer confidence will explode at any time because they know that this government has given unbridled power to big business.

It's sort of ironic. You pick up the paper: banks, \$7.2 billion in profit. That's over the other \$5 billion they made the last quarter. It's not to say all banks are bad, but on the other hand, why not share the wealth a bit? Why not spread that around so the banks can hire some of our young people? Instead, you go to a bank now and all you see are these machines. You're lucky if you find two human beings working in the bank. This is the legacy of this government. It's a government by machine. It's a government by arbitrary measures that has no room for little people.

Sure the big companies — the big oil companies, the big banks — are making money by the barrelful. The stock market on Bay Street is doing fantastic. You go down on Bay Street and the speculators are happy, but if you go down and talk to someone on Main Street — go to Main Street, I say. Talk to people on Main Street. They're not doing well like the banks. They're not speculating in the stock market. They still have to pay a mortgage. They still have to pay for those Hydro bills.

As you know now, we hear that this government is going to increase rates for hot water heaters. This is what this government is going to do: increase rates by up to 40% on your hot water. That's how desperate they are to take money out of little people's pockets. But the big guys: "Oh, Jeez, no, we don't touch the big banks. We don't touch our friends at the oil companies. We don't touch Consumers' Gas. But oh, we'll allow them to raise the hot water rate 40%." What is it going to mean to that little person who has to pay their mortgage, their property tax, their heat and light? This government doesn't care about those people. They say, "Oh, well, the economy is doing great."

1640

I think what we're talking about here is an economy that has to include everyone. Too many people are being left out, too many people who supposedly don't have the skills. But I'll tell you what they do have: They've got the will to work. Most Ontarians are willing to work; they're desperate to work. But they're not going to work if you've

got this attitude of always downsizing, laying people off, closing down subway projects. That's what this government is doing.

There would have been 12,000 people working on the Eglinton subway. Did this government care about those 12,000 people building an Eglinton subway that would have gotten rid of the traffic jams? No. They arbitrarily shut down that project and never gave a tinker's dam for the people who would have been working on that subway. They don't care, as I said, about the little working person who is trying to pay a mortgage or pay the rent.

Talking about paying the rent, they've just taken away rent control. Come the new year, people all across Ontario will not have rental protection. Talk about feeling comfortable over Christmas. Everybody is going to be worried about "How high is my rent going to be? Am I going to be evicted? Is my apartment going to be converted to a condo?" That is the fear and loathing of this government. That's the reality that people feel.

Not the big shots on Bay Street; I'm talking about the little person who lives in an apartment or a little home. They don't like you guys and they're saying: "Slow down. Think of the little people for a change and just stop protecting the big guys. They've got it good, they're taken care of. Now take care of the little people." The big fat cats are doing fine; it's the little guy who needs help.

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): I want to pick up a bit on some of what the previous member has just elaborated on in the House and follow up particularly on the deputy leader of our party, who led off this debate for us and spoke about the lack of democracy here in this Legislature and around Ontario today.

We're speaking this afternoon on concurrence. There are a number of ministries under review that we're going to put some thoughts on the record about, but we as a caucus have chosen to focus today on the Premier's office, which is the epitome of the autocratic nature of the government we have in Ontario today.

I think it's important for all of us at this juncture in the legislative year to take some time to reflect and to think back on what has happened over this past year and past two and a half years, particularly as this government has wielded power, and to put it in the context of how a democracy has evolved in Ontario over a large number of years through various stripes of politician and personality here in this place.

In Ontario we always prided ourselves on being exemplary when it came to the way we included people in decisions we made and tried to have the system of government that we embraced evolve, as opposed to the kind of revolution we've seen in the last two and a half years. If we focus today for a few minutes on the power that particularly this government has placed in the hands of the Premier and a few minions around him, we begin to understand why there is so much anxiety out there in the land.

We as a caucus have just recently, particularly in northern Ontario, undertaken to go out and listen to people, to hear what they have to say about what is going on in their lives, in the lives of their neighbours, in the lives

of their family members and in the lives of the communities in which they live. They have lots to tell us. There's lots of energy, anxiety and concern out there. We hear the gamut of specific concerns, but overall, and most importantly and overwhelmingly, we hear from the people in places like, for example, Elliot Lake, where the member for Algoma and I were last Thursday night.

We hear that this government is a government that is not interested in what people have to say, they're not interested in listening, they're not interested in taking their agenda —

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I really hate to interrupt my friend, but he was talking about whether they're listening or not. There's no quorum in the House.

The Acting Speaker: Would you please check if we have a quorum.

Clerk at the Table: A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk at the Table: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Sault Ste Marie.

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I wonder if it's against the standing orders and I seek your guidance. A quorum was called just a few moments ago and a number of Liberal members went running out of the room so they wouldn't be counted for a quorum. Is that permissible under the orders?

The Acting Speaker: That's not a point of order.

Mr Gerretsen: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Just to put the record straight, the two Liberal members who left had a very important engagement.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order. It's nice to see the House alive again. The member for Sault Ste Marie has the floor.

Mr Martin: When I was interrupted for a quorum — and I think it's important that we have people in the House when we speak on these issues, and it's the government's responsibility to make sure we have quorum here. I believe when they counted, there were five of them in the House.

Anyway, I was saying that this is a government that has developed a bad habit of not listening, of not having any respect for the democratic processes we've collectively put in place over the years as a jurisdiction, as a community of people, to make the laws that govern all of us. When governments don't listen, a number of things happen, including that they are usually not re-elected and the legislation they put in place is usually tainted, it's bad, it turns out to be not in the best interests of the people it was intended to serve.

We've seen instance after instance in this House where the government has come in and rammed through a bill only to find out later that there were major flaws in it, and then not only were they stuck with it but, more important, the people out there in the communities of this province were stuck with it and the impact it has on their lives and the lives of their neighbours. If they had only been re-

spectful of the process, which is a process of consultation, a process of committee hearings and having people in and involving the best minds out there getting their heads around these things, putting together different scenarios, impact studies, that kind of thing wouldn't happen.

I have some respect for some of the members across the way in the government. They're good people and they want to do the right thing. But I'm afraid you won't be back again, because you belong to a government that isn't listening, that's ramming things through, that's in a big hurry. As I said a few minutes ago, I was in Elliot Lake on Thursday night last, and people are telling us that you're just not listening to them. You're not indicating to them that you're concerned or that you hear what they have to say, and so what you're doing ultimately will not be in their best interests, and they know that.

1650

The question then that comes to my mind when we talk about a government that isn't listening is, who are they listening to? Who is it that's influencing this government? Who is it that Mike Harris puts his faith in? Who is it that got together this small group of people to put together, for example, the Common Sense Revolution? Who designed that document? Who drafted that document? Who had input into it and who ultimately, at the end of the day, had input into the evolution of that as it became law and legislation in this place?

Even some of the members of the government have been heard to say over the last couple of months that they're concerned as well that all of the power that this government wields is in the corner office down on the first floor here, or the second floor here, in the Premier's office, and that's a concern. It should be a concern. The sixth floor in the Whitney —

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): He's got a massive, expensive office over in the Whitney Block.

Mr Martin: He's got two offices, apparently, because he has consolidated so much power in his own hands and in the hands of the people who advise him that now, where before a Premier had one office, this Premier has two offices in two buildings.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Sault Ste Marie, address the Chair.

Mr Wildman: The second one is palatial.

Mr Martin: The second one, I am told, is palatial. That shouldn't surprise us either.

Who are they listening to? Here's an example of somebody they're listening to. Just recently, Howard Hampton, the leader of the New Democratic Party in this House, raised the question of one Stewart Braddick. Does that ring a bell for you, a guy by the name of Stewart Braddick, hired to the Premier's office as director of organization, a person with, as it says here, a long and coloured employment history? He was a former staffer of Brian Mulroney. He then took the skills he learned from that government to the BC Liberals, where he was forced to resign. This is one of the guys who's advising your Premier. This is one of the people you've hired to advise you and to tell you how to do business. These are the people

who are running this province right now. It causes me great concern. I don't know about you, Speaker, but I'm sure that when the people out there hear who is behind the throne in this place, behind Mr Harris and the small group of people who run the place, they will have concern too.

It says here that he was forced to resign because he was responsible for a Liberal caucus mailing that broke the rules of the Legislative Assembly in BC. The mailing went across the province and was of an overtly partisan political nature. It seems —

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order. The members for Quinte, Nepean and Fort York, you're disturbing the peace. You really are.

Mr Baird: Which standing order is that?

The Acting Speaker: It's a very clear standing order.

Mr Martin: It's always been my experience in life that when you start to tell the truth and it hurts somebody else or somebody else feels a pinch, they begin to squeal. In this place from time to time the government starts to squeal, and we know that we're probably hitting a nerve or telling a truth that is beginning to hurt. It seems in this instance, whenever you mention some of the names of the people in the back room in Mike Harris's palatial office over in the Whitney Block, they get real nervous and they start to get real anxious. Some of them are even sweating over there a little bit if you look close enough.

I was talking about Mr Braddick. As some of you will remember, it was raised in the House here. He was in charge of a \$1-million abuse in the BC Liberal caucus before he came to work for Mike Harris. He organized for British Columbia a million-dollar taxpayer ripoff. That's what it was called. This is one of the people who is advising Mike Harris in his office.

I've done a little further research on some of the people —

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Quinte, that's enough.

Mr Martin: — who put together the Common Sense Revolution and who actually work with Mike Harris behind the throne in this place. Let's talk for a minute about one Tom Long.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): Oh, he's the real leader.

Mr Martin: Yes, Tom Long. He's a 39-year-old guy who campaigned in 1976 for Ronald Reagan in his unsuccessful attempt to take the presidential nomination away from Gerald Ford and who worked in the Prime Minister's office for that master of fiscal and social responsibility, Brian Mulroney. Does anybody remember Brian Mulroney?

Interjection: I remember.

Mr Martin: Yes? Tom Long was "hired in 1989 by Conrad Black" — interestingly enough, Conrad Black's first noteworthy entrepreneurial act was the selling of stolen examinations at Upper Canada College — "to work for the Dominion Stores division of his empire; shortly before creating a job for Long, Black had systematically

ravaged the once-dominant Dominion grocery chain by selling off its capital, laying off thousands of its workers and looting their pension fund." Tom Long worked for Conrad Black and together they cooked up that scheme.

Mr Bradley: Was Mulroney in on this?

Mr Martin: Somewhere along the line he probably was. This is a guy who is now advising, or did advise, the Premier and was part of developing the Common Sense Revolution. These are the kind of people we have.

Let's just go a little further on Mr Long here. "Ran for and became president of the Ontario Conservative Party while in Black's employ —

Mr Baird: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would ask some guidance from the Chair on standing order 23(b)(i):

"23. In debate, a member shall be called to order by the Speaker if he or she:

"(b) Directs his or her speech to matters other than....

"(i) the question under discussion."

The member hasn't discussed the concurrences for quite some time now.

Mr Wildman: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: One of the concurrences that we are —

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): No, I'm sorry. We're not under debate. I want to rule on this point of order.

Mr Wildman: I am speaking to the point of order.

The Acting Speaker: No, I don't debate rules of order. That is a rule of order and I'll listen attentively to the member for Sault Ste Marie.

Mr Wildman: Mr Speaker, on a new point of order: I'm sure as you listen carefully to the debate you will realize that one of the expenditures in which we are concurring is for the Premier's office. I believe the member for Sault Ste Marie is speaking about the Premier's office and its staff.

The Acting Speaker: That is not a point of order.

Mr Martin: The member for Algoma is absolutely right: I'm speaking about some of the people who work for Mike Harris in his office. That happens to be the Premier's office, just in case the member doesn't understand that. You should get a handle on what's going on here and who actually is in charge and running the shop.

Mr Baird: You are wrong.

The Acting Speaker: Order. What I want to do is to remind speakers that if they address their remarks through the Chair, that will be something I will be looking for.

Mr Martin: What about Leslie Noble? "Campaigning in 1978 for New York Congressman Jack Kemp" — is there a pattern developing here? Is there a bit of a trend? — "an ardent free-marketer and eventual vice-presidential candidate on the Bob Dole ticket in the 1996 American federal election; self-employed co-owner of Strategy Corp, a private public relations company located in the Ernst and Young Tower in downtown Toronto; played a major role in the drafting of the Common Sense Revolution document; co-ran Mike Harris' successful 1995 provincial election campaign; regarded as the conciliator of the Harris election team." It goes on.

What about Bill Young? "Bill Young, CEO of Consumers' Distributing, was an important contributor to the Common Sense Revolution document. A rugged individualist whose company took advantage of a government social program known as bankruptcy protection. Young high-tailed it over the border after Consumers' went belly-up; last seen working as a consultant in Cambridge, Massachusetts. As one journalist wag commented, 'Apparently, there was not enough "dynamic growth in new jobs" in Harris' Ontario to keep him here.'"

What about Jamie Watt? "Jamie Watt, advertising whiz and former press liaison for Mike Harris, was in his younger days caught trying to shore up his Oakville-based clothing business with forged cheques amounting to \$16,000. Fortunately" — and Mr Runciman would be interested in this — "this occurred before the establishment of boot camps; our Jamie served out his time in relative comfort and brevity; 20 nights in jail, with freedom during the days, at a minimum security penal institution." 1700

What about Deb Hutton? There's a name that should ring a bell. Her claim to fame is around one issue that she was supposedly managing: "adviser to Mike Harris, is a central figure in events leading to the fatal shooting of...Dudley George during an Ontario Provincial Police light-brigade-style charge on unarmed aboriginal occupiers of sacred burial grounds at Ipperwash Park in 1995. According to the minutes whose existence the province at first denied, the OPP were instructed at a crucial government meeting — Hutton was present as representative of the Premier's office — to remove the natives from Ipperwash quickly and in the best way they knew how. Until legally compelled to produce the minutes, Queen's Park also denied that any OPP action regarding Ipperwash was discussed at the meeting. Despite all that, and the subsequent charging of the OPP killer of George with criminal negligence, calls for a public inquiry into the Ipperwash affair and Hutton's specific role in it — about which she has been silent — have so far been denied. Compare this to the Harris administration's haste to set up a probe into last year's much less serious clash between OPSEU picketers and the same OPP," and the haste that was taken to also bring my colleague, Peter Kormos, to court over an incident at the family support plan office.

Last but not least, let's take a look for just a second at a favourite of the member for St Catharines, the infamous Guy Giorno. Who is Guy Giorno? Who is this infamous minion in the back rooms of Premier Mike Harris's office? This is just a little brief titbit on Guy. From the people I talked to, he's a bit of a legal lackey.

"Guy Giorno is a legal and policy adviser to Mike Harris and former lawyer with Hicks, Morley, a law firm specializing in, among other things, taking management's part against labour. Hicks, Morley's halcyon days were during the Davis era, when it had a lock on the job of conducting labour negotiations for the Conservative government. When this function was put out for proper tender under the Peterson and Rae governments, the firm was left out in the cold. But soon after Mike Harris' election vic-

tory Hicks, Morley was soon securely back in its former saddle. The Harris administration, without a formal tendering process, awarded the firm a \$15,000-a-month contract to head up negotiations with the Ontario Public Sector Employees Union, (OPSEU) that eventually culminated in a bitter strike. Allegations of patronage swirled around Giorno, who had been given a paid leave of absence by Hicks, Morley to work on Harris' campaign. Finally, he was the one put in charge of assembling odious omnibus Bill 26."

These are just a few of the people, and some of their activities, who advise the Premier in this province today. These are the people who are talking to the Premier about pieces of legislation that affect the lives of all of us.

Mr Baird: Sleaze, sleaze, sleaze.

Mr Martin: You want to talk about sleaze, let's talk about taking 21.6% —

The Acting Speaker: Order. I'm listening attentively to the member for Sault Ste Marie and I'm waiting patiently for you to bring your debate within concurrences on supply.

Mr Martin: I'm trying to explain to my colleagues in this place and I'm trying to explain to the people out there in Ontario who it is who is behind this government, who it is who occupies the Premier's office over in the Mowat Block or the Whitney Block in this precinct, who it is who is driving this agenda and why it is that this agenda, when it begins to show its head in the streets and the avenues of the communities we represent here, is so odious —

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Brant-Haldimand, come to order.

Mr Martin: — so repulsive, so destructive to people. It's because the people who are designing it are, in the first place, themselves of questionable character and of limited understanding of the politics of this and the impact that these initiatives are going to have on the lives of ordinary people, on the lives of families, on the lives of neighbourhoods and communities in this province. That's why I'm raising this issue and that's why I'm raising the names of these people in this place, so people out there will know —

Hon David Turnbull (Minister without Portfolio): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I believe that the blackening of character without any evidence is something which is very unparliamentary. I would suggest, if the member has something to say, that he take it outside of this House, where he's not protected, and repeat what he is saying and face the full consequences of the legal process.

The Acting Speaker: That is not a point of order. The Chair recognizes the member for Algoma.

Mr Baird: Real sleazebags.

Mr Wildman: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I heard the member for Nepean use a word which is completely out of order. It was "sleazebags," and I would ask you to ask him to withdraw it.

The Acting Speaker: In actual fact, I would agree that is quite unparliamentary and I've heard that term from

behind the member for Algoma as well. If anyone has anything they would like to withdraw, then I would give them this opportunity right now. The Chair recognizes the member for Sault Ste Marie.

Mr Martin: Thank you very much, Speaker. I obviously have touched a nerve across the way and generated some reaction. I think it's about time these folks were challenged to speak for what is going on in the Premier's office. You know, when you look at who is advising them and when you take some time to look even closer at who they are and where they come from and what they are about, you begin to understand why their initiatives are having such a terribly destructive impact on the people out there, women and children, families, the school system, the health care system, social services, you name it. There isn't a program or a group of people in Ontario that hasn't been affected in a very destructive and negative way.

I'm going to wrap up my few minutes here today by suggesting that this place should come back to the democracy it has responsibility for protecting and carrying through, the process we've all participated in, in very important ways. Let's look just for a second at some of the people who have been elected to this place over a long period of time and why this government doesn't respect their view, their opinion, the input they have to the various pieces of legislation this government is bringing forward.

I have to look no farther than at my colleague from Algoma. He's been in this place for about 22 years now, has been elected in every election since 1975 because he works on behalf of the people in his constituency, he listens to what they have to say, he brings their voice and their opinion to every piece of legislation that comes through this place, he participates very aggressively and energetically in the debate, and at the end of the day a smart government listens to what he has to say and incorporates it into the legislation that's passed.

Floyd Laughren, the dean of the place — how long has he been around here, 25 years, 26 years? — elected in every election since 1971, has the full support of his constituents, the respect of his constituents because he's a man who understands what democracy is about. He listens to the people who elected him. Before he came here he was an instructor at Cambrian College, he is the father of a number of children and is a grandfather. He is the kind of person you would have faith in, who you know would understand the needs of people and would give input that would be helpful to any government. Any government that would turn its back on that kind of advice I think does us all a tremendous disservice.

Let's look at one of the members of the government, at for example Gary Carr, a member who has now been sidelined, who has now been marginalized, who has now been pushed to the frontier of the government, and for what? For telling the truth, for speaking on behalf of his constituents, for challenging the government.

1710

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton North): And he wasn't thrown out of caucus.

Mr Martin: No, he wasn't thrown out. That's about all that wasn't done to him. He was removed as a parliamentary assistant and kicked off a committee and a number of other things simply because he had the temerity to tell the truth and say it like he saw it. He's a married man with three kids, elected in 1990 and 1995 by his constituents. He's obviously done a good job of representing their view and their opinion, but he's no longer in the loop over there. He's no longer a friend of Guy Giorno and Tom Long.

What about Gerry Phillips, a member from the Liberal caucus, a guy who's been here —

Mr Marchese: A good guy who's a Liberal.

Mr Martin: Yes, an excellent member in this place. Again, a father of four children. Elected in 1987, elected in 1990, elected again in 1995. He had a very distinguished public career in business. Why wouldn't Mike Harris want to listen to him? What is it that Guy Giorno has that Gerry Phillips doesn't have, that Floyd Laughren doesn't have, that Bud Wildman doesn't have, that Gary Carr doesn't have? Why is it they don't have any influence? Why is it guys like Guy Giorno and Tom Long and Leslie Noble and all the other minions who live in the office in the Whitney Block get so much say?

I end my comments there. I want to give at least a couple of minutes to my friend from Fort York, who wants to speak on this. I thank you for your time and your patience.

Mr Marchese: Just a couple of minutes to continue with where my colleague left off and to say, talking about concurrence as it relates to the Premier's office, he spent \$2 million to renovate his office.

Mr Gilles Pouliot (Lake Nipigon): His second office. Second office always costs more.

Mr Marchese: His second office even, I'm told. Two million bucks. This is the guy who has a scorched-earth policy as it relates to everybody else, every ministry you can think of, but he's got the money to renovate his office. He's building a cathedral as he creates a desert around him, a cathedral of \$2 million as he exercises a scorched-earth policy on the rest of the province.

Mr Spina: Hey, poopsa.

Mr Marchese: Speaker, he's speaking to me in Italian again. I love the language, but —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order. I know, but that's really out of order.

Mr Marchese: To the people who are listening, you've got to appreciate where this man's priorities are, where this party is, that it would condone the expenditure of \$2 million at a time when people are seriously being hurt by this economy.

These boys stand up and talk about this great economy that they're generating. Some of these guys yesterday were talking about these jobs that they're creating making \$50,000, \$60,000, \$70,000, \$80,000 a year. I tell you, the young people that the Star is focusing on are saying: "We're unemployed. We're stuck with a big bill because governments like this have increased our tuition fees by 30%. We can't even find a job, except the little McJobs

that are left." That's all they've got, the little jobettes, and these guys are saying, "We are creating thousands of jobs making \$40,000, \$50,000, \$60,000, \$70,000 a year." Would that these young university graduates had the ability, the opening, the window to have such jobs. The doors are closed to these young people.

What we need is a government, obviously, that wants to open some doors so these young men and women have the opportunity to be proud of who they are as human beings, proud to have a job. But not under this government. They're lucky to have a job, if at all, and if they do get it, it's at minimum pay. There's nothing good that we can say about this government.

Mr Spina: I'm so disappointed that my colleague from Sault Ste Marie really took something that I'm positive is beneath his dignity, to make personal attacks.

The member for Oakwood talked about bank machines and losing jobs. That's got nothing to do with the provincial government. The fat cats are really in Ottawa, not in Ontario. The palatial office is hardly the case. We brought the offices in this Legislature up to 1985 standards because of the mess that I recall was left on the carpets by the last government. But that's doom and gloom; that's food for fodder. There was so much of that, you could carry it out on a pitchfork in a wheelbarrow and use it for fertilizer.

But I want to talk about the real, positive stuff that is going on in this province. The member for Muskoka said Ontario's economy has shifted gears from job recovery mode to job growth, that jobs are a key ingredient in boosting housing demand. But combine jobs with affordable mortgage-carrying costs, strengthen home resales, moderate inventories of newly completed and unoccupied homes and they suggest that housing starts should grow further.

My friend from Northumberland talked about traffic jams. But do you know what traffic jams are an indication of, Speaker? They are an indication of the economic barometer of this province. We have created —

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): They're bad highways.

The Speaker: Member for Cochrane South, come to order. You can't stand in the aisle and heckle, for heaven's sake.

Mr Spina: The member for Cochrane South, by the way, knows that more asphalt has been laid in northern Ontario this year in than the past seven years, particularly more than in the five years they said they were leading government.

I want to talk about the positive economic elements of this province. I got a fax an hour ago from Dennis Cutajar, the economic development officer of the city of Brampton. Employment has risen in October 1997 by 4,805 jobs in Brampton. They're not McJobs, as the people indicated, as the member for Fort York tried to tell us.

The reality is that 3,400 of them were created at Nortel — world headquarters for Northern Telecom — in Brampton, high-quality, good-paying professional jobs. Why did Northern Telecom locate to Brampton and

Ontario? Because of the economy. They had a choice. Northern Telecom could have gone to Memphis, Tennessee, where they have a big facility. They could have gone to Belleville, which would have been just as good as Brampton — not for me, but certainly it was in Ontario. They have big operations in Ottawa, but they could have gone to Alberta; they didn't. They could've gone to Tennessee; they didn't. They came to Ontario because this is where it's happening.

Let's look at the other positive numbers. The unemployment rate in the Toronto area dropped from 9.2% to 8.1%. These are important numbers to share with the people of Ontario. Total construction values in Ontario have gone up 76.7% in Brampton. It jumped from \$297 million last year to \$526 million this year. Residential construction jumped from \$191 million to \$316 million, 65.3%, in Brampton. This is the astounding figure: The industrial construction value went from \$36 million to \$112 million, a 205.8% increase in construction value in the industrial unit; 2,612 units of residential housing started. The number of new homes built in the past 10 months exceeded all levels in the 1990s. If that isn't positive news, I don't know what is. That's the reality of the Ontario we live in now.

1720

The member for Cochrane North talks about "the three lost years of the Harris government." Hey, folks, let's talk about the 10 lost years. The Liberals, for starters, had the hottest economy in the history of this country. What did they do? They doubled the public service, blew the taxpayers' dollars out the door. They raised taxes 32 times. Mr Peterson did that. The hottest economy. They had the opportunity to lower the debt of this province. What did they do? They doubled the debt in the five years they were in office, from 1985 to 1990.

Then, to add insult to injury, Mr Rae came in. With all due credit to Mr Rae, Mr Rae had good intentions, but he was hampered —

Interjection: You mean the Bay Street lawyer, Rae.

The Speaker: Order. It's bad form to heckle your own member. I would like to hear him.

Interjection.

The Speaker: I appreciate that, but I still have to hear his comments.

Mr Guzzo: Where does it say that in the rules of procedure?

The Speaker: Member for Ottawa-Rideau, where it says right now you're out of order, so please sit down. I'll warn you, sit down. Member for Brampton North.

Mr Spina: Mr Rae had good intentions but was hampered by his socialist ideology, because that's not an ideology that is prone to balance budgets and to spend taxpayers' dollars effectively.

I was pleased to see the Premier spoke to the Construction Canada show forum at the Metro Convention Centre on December 4. The Premier's comments were, and I just take a couple of excerpts, if I may, from his speech: "We're taking the steps to guarantee the growth of opportunities in the industries like construction, industries that

we depend on for new investment, for jobs and growth, because when you start any construction project, you also build the economy. We all know how construction has a multiplier effect. It creates new jobs, new opportunities, not only in the building trades but also in a host of spinoff industries, and that has a tremendous positive effect on our entire economy."

We are talking about a concurrence bill here. A concurrence bill, if I understand it correctly, really has to do with releasing the funds to be able to fund the public service. I want to say a few words about the public service. I had the good fortune of being asked to speak to the northern development and mines staff ministry meeting a couple of weeks ago, in Sault Ste Marie, I might add. We brought a little economic development to the member's riding.

I was very happy to share with the members of the public service that it's important that we work together, because a government can set policy, a government can set direction, a government can set objectives and goals that we want to achieve while we are in office, but it's important that you have the support and the work of good, qualified, enthusiastic public servants. They are the ones who help to deliver the government's message effectively.

The people who do not agree and have not agreed with our direction and with running a good, positive, professional government service are gone. I'm pleased to see that the ones who are here are the ones who are here to implement a positive government public service. It's important that we work together as a team for the maximization of services to the provincial taxpayer.

I want to compliment people in the private sector, like my friends Mario and Severio Montemarano of Melody Homes and the Hollywood Princess Banquet Hall, people who have a solid commitment to economic growth in this province. That's what this is about.

Mr Gerretsen: Let's get one thing straight. Some people are better off than they were two years ago, no question about it, and there isn't a person in this province who wouldn't like a tax cut. The problem is, we can't afford a tax cut right now. That's the bottom line, for all you business types on the government side. I've got the proof here of why we cannot afford a tax cut. I see the member for Oxford shaking his head, but let's just take a look at it.

You are still increasing the public debt of this province. According to your own budget document, we will be going from \$100 billion, which is where it was when you took over, to \$118 billion by the year 2000. Even this year we are adding \$6 billion to the public debt. It doesn't make any sense to start giving people tax cuts when we still have an annual deficit and when we are still increasing the public debt of this province.

Let's took a look at what the interest actually costs us on a yearly basis. In the current year we anticipate paying \$9.1 billion in interest payments on the public debt, which is \$2 billion more than we paid two and a half years ago. How can you possibly justify, on any economic basis, that we're paying \$2 billion more just on the interest on the debt and still give people a tax cut at the same time?

There are some people who are doing better than they were two years ago, than they were three years ago, but there are an awful lot of people who are not doing as well. Let's talk about some of these people who aren't doing as well. Let's talk about the most vulnerable in our society. I would like to mention again what I questioned the Minister of Health on today, and that is the closing of the Community Crisis Centre and the community activity centre for the mentally ill in my own riding of Kingston and The Islands.

Let me tell you a little bit about the agony some of these people are feeling. I'm talking about 160 people or so for whom this centre has become a home over the last 10 or 15 years and who now literally don't have a place to go, people who live, in many cases, in boarding-houses, and the only place they could get some self-esteem, get some of their good feelings back, was through the community activities in these centres.

I'll quote from a letter that was written today to my local newspaper, the Kingston Whig-Standard, by one of these people, Phyllis Sparks. I will just read some of the paragraphs, and then you make the decision whether you feel the Minister of Health did the right thing. She states as follows:

"What the provincial government has done to the Community Crisis Centre is not fair to the centre and its clients. The government should have given the centre and its clients more notice that the centre was to be closed. This would have given the centre time to talk with its clients and let them know what the Ministry of Health was doing.

"The government is in the wrong for not giving the centre and its clients any notice of the closure. It just walked in, closed the building and gave them only so many hours to get what they needed. There are people in the community who had only the centre for support. Now they don't have it any more....

"Some people could lose their lives over this closure." Think about that for a moment. "The Community Crisis Centre was there for people like us to reach out to for help. If you want a better city, stop what is being done to people's lives. The government is hurting a lot of people.

"If the people who made this decision" — and that's the Minister of Health and the ministry staff — "are concerned, they should show it by stopping what they're doing. Leave everything alone. I'm letting them know how I feel and how concerned I am because I am one of the people they are affecting. That is why I'm writing this letter.

"I hope that you have a good Christmas, because we won't. If you have a heart, stop everything you are doing to people and their lives."

That is just one letter. I was at a meeting last Friday where dozens of these people were present, and they were not only concerned; they were crying, they were anxious, because their home has literally been taken away from them.

1730

Let's just read what the Kingston Whig-Standard had to say by way of an editorial. I'll just read you portions of the editorial.

"We live in barbaric times." That's how it starts. "How else to explain the sudden closing of two Kingston crisis centres and the blunt, uncaring treatment of their clients and staff by the Ontario Ministry of Health?"

"Ministry personnel moved in like storm troopers last Thursday on the Kingston Clubhouse Activity Centre on Barrie Street and the Community Crisis Centre on Brock Street. At the Clubhouse, staff were dismissed with just four hours' notice, the centre was shut down, door locks were changed and security guards were posted outside.

"At a public meeting the next day, [a] ministry bureaucrat...explained the turn of events this way: 'It's not a perfect thing to do. You can do it over a long period, or you can do it quickly. Whether it's easier to do it quickly, you can dispute that. It's been done.'"

He "was addressing only one side of the equation:" — the editorial goes on — "the budget savings and the surgical-like precision with which his staff closed the two centres.

"Why the ministry had to operate in so cold and calculating a manner is inexplicable — and indefensible....

"Efficiencies may have been necessary for these community agencies. That is not an issue, as long as alternatives were being made available to these clients and they had some input into future decisions. But the manner in which the closings were carried out was reprehensible and disrespectful."

That's how the community feels about it. That's your bully government and the bully tactics you're employing. That's the kind of anger, anxiety and tearfulness that you have caused in a awful lot of individuals. So don't tell me about how good some people are doing. We all agree with that. But we also agree that when governments get elected, they get elected to govern for all the people of Ontario and not just for those who support a particular government.

It's very interesting. I'm reading a book right now called *Beyond Greed, A Traditional Conservative Confronts Neo-Conservative Excess*, and it's written by Hugh Segal. Hugh Segal is a Kingstonian, a man I know well, a man I've worked with on a number of different campaigns etc. Let's just see what he has to say about the neo-conservative revolution with which your government is totally and absolutely rampant.

This is what he has to say —

Hon Rob Sampson (Minister without Portfolio [Privatization]): "Please join the party."

Mr Gerretsen: No, no. He is saying: "Unlimited polarity and class division lead to the easy dismissal of opposing views as somehow of lesser value or from lesser people or of causes that are of lesser merit. Neo-conservatives" — and I'm sure he's talking about your government — "are masters at this, belittling the source of any contrary opinion, rather than engaging on the substance of the argument as equals. Their opponents are morally deficient, or insufficiently Christian, or, in the

new neo-con construct, intellectually somehow more narrow or shallow.

"The more traditional conservative view, which seeks not to polarize but to unite, seeks merit in opposing arguments so as to reconcile. It disdains artificial or hyped polarity, because division for its own sake serves no purpose. Conservatism embraces the enterprise-based economic model, but as only one aspect of the larger truth. It does not see polarization as a valid route to electoral victory. And it values cooperation as a sinew of hope not an admission of weakness....

"What they" — you neo-conservatives — "fail to understand — or worse do understand and don't care about — is the damage to all economic models the end of citizenship will bring. The end of citizenship is the end of stability. The end of citizenship...leads inexorably to the end of civility. The victory of the forces of polarity means the defeat of moderation and common enterprise."

From what I've seen around here from this government for the last two and a half years, you fit that model precisely. You are the neo-conservatives, and one of these days, in the next election, the people of Ontario are going to say, "There is a better way." We don't have to antagonize every group, particularly the most vulnerable in our society. We don't have to do it that way. We can govern Ontario for all the people of Ontario. The economic truth that you people seem to think is out there somehow isn't the only aspect of society. I would suggest that you read this and see if you can see yourselves in the mirror.

This comes from one of your guys, Hugh Segal, a well-known Tory, but unfortunately he certainly isn't anything like you Tories. I shouldn't say "unfortunately"; fortunately for him because I wouldn't wish that on anybody.

The point I'm simply trying to make is that the mere fact that the economy may be looking good to some people and they may actually be better off than they were a couple of years ago isn't the totality of the reality for what we call Ontario. Show a little bit of compassion. Show a little bit of understanding to the less fortunate in our society.

As we have just experienced in Kingston, the closing of these two crisis centres I think is probably the best example of your bullying tactics, your bulldozing kind of behaviour. You could say it was the officials who were doing it. We all know they acted on the leadership of the minister involved, and the minister should take responsibility for it and actually do something about it.

Mr John C. Cleary (Cornwall): I'm pleased to participate in the debate. I want to talk about health issues in my riding. I can recall that when Jim Wilson was in opposition and then he became Minister of Health later on, he was always complaining about dialysis, how his residents had to travel miles and miles for dialysis treatment. His problem is solved, but ours in Cornwall is still not solved.

Eighteen months ago the Minister of Health promised dialysis for Cornwall. Because Minister Wilson and his staff had not been thorough and efficient and selected a provider that was under investigation in the United States, the next 16 months were spent in a legal battle. In August of this year, the court proceedings finally concluded. The

minister still couldn't act, saying instead that we would have to wait 30 days. The 30 days passed, another 30 days passed and another 30 days have passed. That's over three months. It's the end of the proceedings and it's been 18 months since the minister first made his announcement.

Now we have a new minister. I spoke to her on many, many occasions and I understand she is sincere and that she is trying to speed up the process to get the dialysis opened in my riding so that many of our residents from eastern Ontario will not have to do the travelling and put up with the severe weather conditions and all. People are still frustrated and they come into my office every week complaining, and some of them are almost at the stage of giving up. The situation is getting much worse because more of the residents are needing the dialysis. They come from three or four ridings in eastern Ontario. At this point the patients have to travel to Ottawa or Kingston and it's a three-hour trip. They have to do that three times a week under severe weather conditions.

The government must live up to the promise it made last April. The patients in my area need dialysis, and the reason they can't get it locally is that the government did not have its act together. I'm a firm believer that if they would put their heads together, this could happen much faster.

I don't like being a member of this Legislature and making patients the victims of inadequate service. In fact, last week a brother of one of my constituents was in the office and he said he was going to give up because he cannot afford the trip, that he cannot stand it, it's too hard on his nerves and he's putting his family at risk. I pleaded with him not to give up, not to quit, at least to give the government another month, because I know there couldn't be a better Christmas present for the residents of my riding who depend on dialysis than to have units set up where they could get dialysis treatment locally. There are many, not only from my riding but from S-D-G, Prescott-Russell and all over eastern Ontario. I know this government told all the residents there would be savings in the health care system and the dialysis would come, but we're not getting it. I'm very disappointed, as are many of the residents.

1740

The other thing I would like to talk a little bit about is the downloading that happened with the provincial highways in eastern Ontario. A provincial highway that runs right from the Quebec border to Highway 2 has been downloaded on the county system, with only a third of the money to go along with that. I don't know where those counties are going to pick up those extra dollars, and there are millions of dollars, to upgrade those highways.

It's all right to talk about all the tax breaks and all the good things, but the poor municipal people, with the legislation that has passed, are in real trouble. Between that and the dialysis, those are big issues in my riding. If this government would get moving, the dialysis could be in Cornwall shortly and help the residents a lot.

My colleague has a couple minutes, if he wants to speak.

Mr Bradley: I simply want to take the opportunity in the last couple of minutes to emphasize what the members have had to say. On many occasions the member for Cornwall has raised the issue in this House and in other places of the need for dialysis right across the province, and certainly for the people in eastern Ontario.

I've also heard him mention St Lawrence Parks and the jobs opportunities that would be available at St Lawrence Parks if the government were to reopen them and have them in full use. It would be good for tourist purposes and for jobs purposes, and I've also heard him mention, with a lot of justification, the real problem of the downloading of roads that all of us have across the province. Certainly John Cleary, the member for Cornwall, has raised this on many occasions, first of all the maintenance of the roads, where there were potholes in the potholes last year along the 401 in eastern Ontario, but also the downloading of responsibilities in his part of the province for roads which were a provincial jurisdiction and are now a local jurisdiction.

I was pleased to see him once again in this venue, as he has in so many other venues, raise the issue. I'm simply surprised that the government has not responded in a more timely and comprehensive fashion to the pleas of the member for Cornwall to have appropriate dialysis service in his area so that people don't have to go long distances and perhaps place their health and ultimately their lives in jeopardy by the lack of these adequate services.

I want to commend him for raising these important issues for the people of Cornwall and the surrounding area. They are ones which all of us can appreciate are of significance, just as you would know, Mr Speaker, in the Niagara Peninsula people are calling our constituency offices now asking why we're seeing cutbacks in the home care services that are available, because they are now kicking people out of the hospitals. As a result of the Harris policy of underfunding hospitals, they're now kicking people out of hospitals more quickly and more sickly. As a result of that, people have to re-enter the hospital on many occasions, and when they have to have services at home, I can tell you, as you would know in Etobicoke — you're probably getting calls now — people are saying, "Why would you be cutting back on those services at a time when the government is giving away a huge tax cut to the wealthiest people in our society?"

I believe the time has come for a vote on concurrences this afternoon. I wish there were much more time, but there isn't more time, so I will acquiesce to the Chair and we will have a vote on the concurrences. I'm sure it will be an interesting one.

The Speaker: Mr Runciman has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Health, including supplementaries.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

I declare the motion carried.

Mr Runciman has moved concurrence in supply for the Office of the Premier. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

I declare the motion carried.

Mr Runciman has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Natural Resources. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

I declare the motion carried.

Mr Runciman has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of the Attorney General, including supplementaries. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

I declare the motion carried.

Mr Runciman has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Intergovernmental Affairs. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

I declare the motion carried.

Mr Runciman has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Education and Training, including supplementaries. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

I declare the motion carried.

Mr Runciman has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Transportation, including supplementaries. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

I declare the motion carried.

Mr Runciman has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

I declare the motion carried.

Mr Runciman has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Environment and Energy. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

I declare the motion carried.

Mr Runciman has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

I declare the motion carried.

It now being fairly close to 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 6:30 of the clock.

The House adjourned at 1749.

Evening sitting reported in volume B.

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No. 258B

N° 258B

ISSN 1180-2987

Legislative Assembly of Ontario

First Session, 36th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Première session, 36^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Tuesday 9 December 1997

Mardi 9 décembre 1997



Speaker
Honourable Chris Stockwell

Président
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 9 December 1997

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 9 décembre 1997

The House met at 1831.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TAX CREDITS TO CREATE JOBS ACT, 1997

LOI DE 1997 ACCORDANT DES CRÉDITS D'IMPÔT POUR CRÉER DES EMPLOIS

Resuming the adjourned debate on the motion for second reading of Bill 164, An Act to implement job creation measures and other measures contained in the 1997 Budget and to make other amendments to statutes administered by the Ministry of Finance or relating to taxation matters / *Projet de loi 164, Loi visant à mettre en oeuvre des mesures de création d'emplois et d'autres mesures mentionnées dans le budget de 1997 et à apporter d'autres modifications à des lois dont l'application relève du ministère des Finances ou qui traitent de questions fiscales.*

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean): Is there the opportunity for questions and comments on the last speech we had?

The Deputy Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): To the member for Nepean, the last speakers are not here, so we don't do the questions and comments when the speakers aren't here to rebut them.

The member for Lake Nipigon.

Mr Gilles Pouliot (Lake Nipigon): When I first read the title of what is being debated tonight, and I quote, "An Act to implement job creation measures and other measures contained in the 1997 Budget and to make other amendments to statutes administered by the Ministry of Finance or relating to taxation matters," I wished to start by saying what a pleasure it is indeed every time there is an incentive especially focused at small business. We in the New Democratic Party welcome all initiatives and most opportunities, for they create employment.

However, upon closer scrutiny I soon realized that this bill is most enjoyably read backwards because in those 199 pages the devil begins to emerge. This is a document that covers sins and omissions, things like dozens upon dozens of amendments regarding other bills. You know what has taken place, Madam Speaker. You were in the House when the government, in its haste regarding Bill 160, that dreadful systematic, deliberate, destructive attack on education, the beginning of a slow, prolonged death, did this and then moved on. It was on a Monday.

On the Tuesday they were on the other track with the downloading, the Who Pays for What bill, starting January 1.

Then there was Bill 149, the taxation bill on property.

Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, but they made mistakes. You see, first they set the rules. Then they found themselves, in their haste and their incompetence, unable to abide by the rules they themselves set and they came up with Bill 164. They gathered, they met in the Premier's office and they said, "How will we sell Bill 164?" "We'll call it an act for job creation and we will dedicate eight, 10, 12 pages documenting a series of promises that were made long ago. But if we say it loud enough and if we say it often enough, we can keep reannouncing the same budget measures week after week or month after month, so why not make it official? Why not say, 'We'll call it Bill 164.' Then we'll press the high-speed button on the press and print the other 190 pages of amendments."

They were in such a hurry to cover their sins of omission, to cover their tracks, they went as far as to present, to introduce Bill 164 in the House before the other bills had been passed. They were so confused, Speaker Stockwell had a hard look at it and said, "This is not, when you read between the lines" — well, he said to them, "Okay, I'll let you go this time, but what you are doing is wrong and it should not happen."

Others picked up on what Stockwell said and went further and said: "This is not a surprise, although it's wrong. It's an affront to democracy." That's the way you began with Bill 26; that's the way you choose to operate and now you are getting caught. Your plan of attack of does not produce the results you had expected.

It was easy at first for there was very little resistance. People would not — in some cases, could not — speak up, speak out about the government's agenda. They were either frightened or they were the voices of the less fortunate. They were too remote from the mainstream for their voices to be heard.

So today we have to deal with Bill 164, and you've heard the soldiers of misery, the advocates of the present government take full credit for any recovery that is happening and is about to happen in the future. It's as if Ontario did not exist in the past 10 or 12 years. It only began to prosper when the Progressive Conservative Party took office on that day, June 8, 1995. Long before that, the United Nations had decreed that Canada was the best country in which to live; Canada, not Ontario, the whole country, the 10 provinces and the territories in their ensemble. Alas, the Progressive Conservatives were not in

power in Ontario. So life goes on and the higher the reward the higher the risk, when you insist on taking credit for an upswing in the economy.

Our party is very pleased for every person that finds steady employment, a good job with a good boss, and we want to wish governments of any stripe well. We don't wish for the economy to be bad; quite the contrary. It's very lucrative in many ways for most of us, if not all of us, when our neighbours are working, when people have money in their pockets and they can buy consumer goods. But to hear them say that all is well, that's it's all even, that everyone has benefited, is far from the truth, most inaccurate. All is not well.

Let me share with you, with the highest of respect, the words of our Lieutenant Governor, Her Honour Hilary Weston. This is what Her Honour said at the Canadian Club, a well-known organization based in Toronto: "People in Ontario want 'a more caring and more compassionate society,' Lieutenant Governor Hillary Weston said yesterday in reviewing her first year in office." Her Majesty's representative said that.

1840

Mr Baird: But she signed every bill we passed.

Mr Pouliot: Will you please show respect? Those are the words of Her Honour Hilary Weston. She went on to say, "There are many of our fellow citizens who are hurting and are in dire need of help." It's sort of a subtle message to the government, saying that not everybody is benefiting from the recovery. She said, "But the recovery is far from stable, nor is it universal." There is a message here.

We notice during this recovery that the gap between the very rich and the middle class keeps widening. You've heard it before. The poor get poorer, the middle class gets eroded and, in this game of winner take all, those who are the strongest, those who can run the fastest are taking an increasing share of wealth. When they do that, the middle class gets eroded further, the poor lose hope. They're further away from the mainstream.

The bus shelters are getting occupied, you've noticed, in your riding, more homeless people; more youth unemployment at a stage that's been described as being catastrophic; more student debt than ever before; among the middle class, more personal bankruptcies, people giving up, walking away from their homes, tossing their keys to the landlord. "Can't make the cheque any more. Take it." Student loans: \$22,000 for graduate study, on the average. You start your working career and you're behind the eight ball to the tune of \$22,000. With youth unemployment so high, your chances of getting anything but a jobette, I mean a good steady job that pays relatively well so you can pay your student loans, are quite remote.

When you say this is a recovery of extraordinary proportions, you should seek equilibrium and balance because the street out there paints a different picture. It paints a different picture to the marginalized, those on general assistance. It paints a different picture for still far too many senior citizens who don't have enough money aside from the bare necessities. It paints a different picture for

our young people, the future of Ontario, who are not given the tools to integrate economically.

You must also say that, for failure to do so would be at your own peril and would jeopardize credibility, which is quickly eroding. People have said to you, "What is your plan of attack?" Be systematic. Superimpose your idea with a timetable. Come to the marketplace and we will do it together. But if there ever was a government that refuses to listen, to engage in consultation, it is this present government.

After only two short years in office, I never heard the sort of direct, bold language vis-à-vis ours or the Liberals' as I have vis-à-vis the present administration. I've heard words that I hesitate to repeat, words such as "dictators."

I caution you, we still have a system that works. We have an aberration, I agree. It will take some time. We still have a Constitution. They will have to go back to the people so I won't go as far as to say that the government is made up of dictators. I too, from time to time, believe that their measures are dictatorial. I have heard words such as "bullies," "thugs," "morally bankrupt," and other words. But suffice it to say, I think the message gets across.

I am concerned about the government losing the respect of the population. When this happens, it's not good for any of the people's representatives. We all suffer. It's unfortunate that 81 members in this House of 130 give the others such a bad reputation because I know that the opposition and most government members, in their own circles, are honest, well-meaning people. I know some of them personally once we leave the chamber. The problem arises when they get together. They change. It's a Jekyll and Hyde thing. It's as if you put them behind a wheel and they all believe they can drive like Villeneuve, they can drive a car fast. But if you can take them one by one, then it's really not so bad, it's not that desperate.

When they talk about the economic recovery, it's a recovery unlike the others, where the majority of people are hardly, if at all, better off than they were: again, a high degree of unemployment among our young people; senior citizens who now have to pay user fees for things such as prescription drugs; and a middle class that is no better off than they were a couple of years ago. Except for a few people who have benefited greatly from the tax break and have seen their bonuses and stipends and salaries go up by leaps and bounds, the rest of us have hardly benefited.

"Repaying Huge Loans 'A Barrier to Education'" — a deterrent indeed. This is part of a three-month investigation conducted by the Toronto Star. The Toronto Star is the largest-circulation newspaper not only in Ontario but in Canada. The Star sent three reporters out. They spoke to 1,000 young people between the ages of 18 and 30. One third of the 1,000 they spoke to — so this is not a sample, this is a survey — had \$13,000 in student loans. "Next year," 1998, "the average debt load for graduating students is expected to be about \$25,000."

This government has cut them off at the pass. It increased tuition fees big time. Remember that? It decreased opportunities for young people to get a summer or a part-time job. So what do they do? They borrow money; they

want to stay in school. It's difficult to get a job with an education, but without one it's almost impossible to get a good job, if you don't have the proper credentials. So they persevere and now they're caught. The average will be \$25,000.

Jonathan Paine is 26 years of age, in architecture. He needs the student loans; his parents aren't rich. At this time Jonathan is \$20,000 behind the eight ball, in the red. But he perseveres. Tomorrow will get better; life's a dream and it gets better. He expects to owe \$50,000 by the time he's finished. "But Paine is optimistic: 'I'm anticipating paying it back and not defaulting.'" Jonathan Paine, I hope everything goes well for you. But you see, Jonathan, I can't help but be saddened, concerned. I share in your burden of \$50,000. I know you want well. You're 26 years of age and the world is your oyster, everything looks so well, but \$50,000 is a lot of money. I have some difficulty reconciling the sum, it's so enormous.

1850

"Student loans are becoming a barrier to education, says federal Finance Minister Paul Martin." Mr Martin, you're the big-time guy there, you're the big boss. You cut transfer payments to the provinces a couple of years back and you're saying now, by your own admission, that it's a barrier. You're the person who signs the cheque. By the stroke of a pen, show them your power, Paul. Help those people. Help them with a new financial scheme. Listen to what they have to say. That's what New Democrats would do. New Democrats consult; they listen well. Then, together, we can get out of this mess. But you have to treat cases individually, not collectively, because they're talking about 50,000 bucks in the case of Jonathan Paine. How many years will he have to work with Tridel, with Cadillac Fairview, to be able to pay back the loan and the interest that keeps going and going and going?

Jonathan believes the words of Tommy Douglas: If you can pay the banker, everything is possible; but if you cannot pay the banker, hardly anything is possible. Tommy Douglas said that, the father and founder of medicare, still with us today, under some severe attack by the right-of-centre administrations.

When all is said and done, if you're to read those 199 pages, in relatively short order you will acquiesce that Bill 164, An Act to implement job creation measures and other measures contained in the 1997 Budget, has very little to do with job creation. This is an omnibus bill. It gives them yet another opportunity to shove legislation down Ontarians' throats without debate. They've had some opportunities with Bill 160, Bill 152, Bill 149 and other bills to come to the Legislature and to debate it. In this case, they are in such a hurry that they're putting it under this omnibus legislation. Anything from assessment of property and reassessment to downloading, who will pay for what starting January 1, errors, additions — you find them in this bill. It's certainly something else.

It gives the minister all the powers. It tells the municipalities what to write but also what not to write on your tax notices when you go and collect the shortfall. They say: "We must have it uniform; everybody must be able to

read it the same. Don't print the truth, don't have any additions, because this will point the finger at our government." The government shouldn't be too concerned because they've been saying loud and clear that the downloading bill, Bill 152, is revenue-neutral. That's what the Progressive Conservatives have said. I've heard M. Leach, Mr Harris and Mr Eves say that this is a break-even bill.

People are assuming that their property taxes will not go up: "If it's revenue-neutral, if it's break-even, my taxes won't go up, will they?" But when pressed, when you ask them that question: "Will the taxes in this community go up?" "Overall it will be revenue-neutral; there might be winners and losers." "How many?" "We don't know." "Do you have an impact study?" "No, we don't." "When will this take effect?" "January 1st." "Oh, three weeks from today." "Yes, that's right." "Who pays for what and who does what?" "We don't know yet, but trust us." "Is it revenue-neutral?" "Yes, it is." "Why did you add another \$800 million in the past two weeks if it is revenue-neutral?" There would be no need to add any money. "It's a transition fund to make up the difference because there will be a shortfall." "Will the transition fund be available in year two? Will the transition fund be available in year three?" No municipalities have received the formula.

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton North): Year four, five, six; every year after that.

Mr Pouliot: I'm hearing the sad interjection of the parliamentary assistant for northern development and mines. I can hear him all the way in northern Ontario, because both the minister and the parliamentary assistant reside in southern Ontario. Yes, they do know a lot about mining and forestry, I can assure you. They have never seen a live Christmas tree, but that's okay. Nevertheless we want to wish them well.

They're about to take credit for a gold mine opening in the great riding of Lake Nipigon. About three months ago, there was an official opening in the riding of Lake Nipigon — great employment, gold mine — and the Conservatives had the audacity to take credit for the opening of a gold mine. The parliamentary assistant said, as if he had planted the gold in the ground, "I hope people won't get discouraged." I said, "Don't worry, if the price stays up" — it's down now — "they're not going to take the gold under their arms and run away with it; it is under the ground." But no, the Conservatives thought: "That's it, we planted the gold mine; we'll take credit for the opening of a gold mine. We created a climate whereby" —

Mr Spina: Put a little water in and watch it grow.

1900

Mr Pouliot: One says to put a little water in and watch it grow. Humour does not become that sad lot, it's obvious. My God, put a little water in and watch it grow.

I want to share with you, through Bill 164, what is likely to happen in our communities in northwestern Ontario and northern Ontario, south-central and southeastern Ontario starting on January 1, 1998. The first business day, January 2, the day after New Year's Day, the bills will begin to arrive. The difference this year is that this is a brand-new ball game. Services that were paid for by the

province of Ontario are now the responsibility of municipalities. They are of extraordinary proportions. We are talking of upwards of \$1 billion leaving the province's responsibility and being downloaded on the shoulders of municipalities.

They will have only the education portion of the residential levy to cushion the impact, a 50% break which will not begin to suffice, will not begin to make up the difference when you start picking up all additional services. Where we live, be it in Geraldton, Longlac, Jellicoe, Beardmore, Nipigon, Red Rock, Hurkett, Dorion, Manitowadge, Marathon, in the great riding of Lake Nipigon, there isn't one community which will break even. We will only have 50% of the previous year's amount to collect. Yet to this day there is no indication as to how and when the slack will be picked up. This is unbelievable.

The Conservatives, who pride themselves on being good business managers, couldn't run the smallest of enterprises successfully. They don't have a business plan. They have no organizational skills. The proof is in the tax bill: Three weeks before implementation, nobody knows.

Anxiety takes on extraordinary proportions and leads to fear, and then the final levy will include an additional twist. As you are well aware, the assessment of property —

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): On a point of order, Madam Speaker: I believe the government yet again has lost quorum in the House. I ask you to check.

Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East): Gilles, we had a deal.

The Deputy Speaker: Clerk, could you check and see if there is a quorum, please.

Clerk at the Table (Ms Lisa Freedman): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk at the Table: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Lake Nipigon.

Mr Pouliot: We live through exciting and yet very busy times, so from time to time we make agreements vis-à-vis the rules of procedure and by and large they work pretty fine. But obviously people have so much on their plates, they're so busy trying to put their best foot forward, it's not 100% foolproof.

I see Madame Brenda Elliott shaking her head in disdain and disgust. I envy you. You've never made a mistake in your life. I'm here to protect some of my colleagues. I envy you greatly. I don't meet too many people like you. I'm truly honoured.

Mrs Brenda Elliott (Guelph): Thank you, Gilles.

Mr Pouliot: I'll stop it here.

Come June, the new twist will be the final assessment and then there will be some dislocation. Right now, 3.8 million units across the province are being re-evaluated. They're being assessed and reassessed, the value of one unit compared to another within a certain vicinity. There will be some severe dislocation and people won't have the opportunity to spread it over several years, for the municipalities will need the money badly because the government

will have downloaded some new responsibilities without including the full cheque in the mail. They will have little or no alternative but to extend a line of credit, go to the industrial sector by way of a new class of subtax, hit the small entrepreneur only too hard and dump the remaining at the residential level.

Then they will be completing year three of their regime, and by this time, with their little tricks, it was to be all over. They were to do all the bad things during the first two years. The revolution was to be over. Then they were to take a break, come back in March and go back into their bag of tricks and come up with a few dollars and bribe the electorate with their own tax dollars.

But they've hit a snag. Their revolution did not go according to plan. The resistance they encountered grew stronger and louder. They've made so many mistakes, first it was a week behind schedule and now it's six to eight months behind schedule and they haven't even reached the implementation stage.

People will not forget your dislocation, your attempt at changing Ontario for what you say, for what you hope, for what you call a better Ontario, when you broke things that need not have been fixed. You've gone too far.

Again, the reaction in the community is one of disbelief. Look at what happened. They said: "This is a government that will keep its word. We won't be a government like the others." This government, during relatively prosperous times, has managed to alienate and to hurt more people than any government before. They've cut the budget on health care; look at the state of our hospitals. They've increased the burden on senior citizens; look at the levy on prescription drugs. They have hit the less fortunate, the marginalized 21.6%; look at the number of homeless people. Cheap hotels and motels are filled with people. Bus shelters are occupied. Walk down the street in downtown Toronto, in any major city, and ask yourself, "Have I ever encountered so many people panhandling, so many beggars, so many poor people?" They have left the mainstream, not during a recession, during what they call times of prosperity. If this is not a disgrace, I don't know what is.

Mr Gilchrist: A \$100-billion debt.

Mr Pouliot: And on the eve of Christmas.

I heard people across saying a \$100-billion debt. Mr Gilchrist, the mathematician, with respect to you, sir, if you have an \$11-billion debt —

Mr Gilchrist: Deficit.

Mr Pouliot: Deficit, thank you kindly — my theory, my opinion would be that I would pay the debt first instead of having to borrow for \$5.4 billion in tax credits that will not translate into jobs in the same way. I belong to that school of thought.

Mr Gilchrist: That's why we're not doing that.

Mr Pouliot: I respect you and I respect your opinion. It's a matter of style. But I find it in my economics passing strange that when you insist on paying down the debt — and heaven knows it's a burden and should be paid down, it's not a very hard choice to make. I go after the mortgage, I go after the debt first.

Mr Gilchrist: Conversion on the road to Damascus or the road to Manitouwadge.

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Mr Pouliot: I was converted long ago. Tommy Douglas converted me: If you can pay the banker, everything is possible; if you cannot, hardly anything is possible.

I've been studying the people across, the government of today, very carefully in the past two and a half years. In fact, it was two and a half years yesterday. I've searched long and hard to find a methodology associated with that mentality. Why is it they're doing this and they're doing that? Why must so many people fall? What are the benefits? To this day, I am unable to find — well, a little but not a lot of merit in their method. I see more madness, I see more hurt, more pain than ever before in Ontario.

What is happening to us? Why the disparity? On the one hand you can venture, for the most fortunate, I think it's Dundas Street, to a Mercedes Benz dealership, order a sports utility vehicle, an ML 3.2-litre or 4.3, and you will be told that there's a waiting list of a year and a half to two years. This is the Ontario they have created.

Mr Baird: How do you know there's a waiting list? Who told you that?

Mr Pouliot: Because the brokers, the bankers, the business people, those who clip coupons, the hoarders, have formed a line.

Yet you go through Regent Park on your way to the Eaton Centre and you will see in front of your very eyes that bus shelters are occupied by people who are homeless. Churches are full. Rundown cheap motels and hotels, roach-infested, are filled with people, with human beings. Young people are desperate to make ends meet. Nice, isn't it?

Madame, à chaque opportunité, vous me connaissez, depuis 13 ans en cette saison, à l'approche de notre Noël à nous, ce qui devrait être notre Noël à nous tous, j'ai pris l'occasion de mentionner les Ontariens et les Ontariennes, Canadiens et Canadiennes que la vie avait un peu oubliés. Je disais tout à l'heure en anglais qu'il s'agit en 1997 — so much to say, so much to be done.

Il y a tant à faire : les démunis, les personnes âgées, les esseulés, les marginalisés, les pauvres, enfin ceux qui se cherchent, ceux qui cherchent mais néanmoins ceux qui en ont moins. Dans une remontée, dans une recouverte économique, vous comprendrez très bien que le gouvernement a maintenant à sa disposition à peu près tous les outils pour alléger le fardeau fiscal, pour enrayer cette pauvreté qui afflige, qui touche tant de gens de chez nous en Ontario.

Vous avez d'une part les étudiants et les étudiantes à l'échelle universitaire, ces jeunes adultes qui doivent emprunter jusqu'à un total de 50 000 \$ pour se donner les outils pour être comme les autres, pour s'intégrer, pour se donner une meilleure chance de devenir un citoyen ou une citoyenne à part entière. Aussi, ce gouvernement a choisi, s'est fait des alliés, de choyer ceux qui en avaient le moins besoin, les mieux nantis, les personnes qui peuvent courir le plus vite et qui bénéficient le plus de toute remontée, de

toute recouverte économique. Ce sont des gens qui sont riches. Ce sont des gens qui bénéficient.

Par contre, la classe moyenne, qui paie pour tout ça, se voit en diminution, se voit éroder, et les pauvres conséquemment deviennent encore plus pauvres. Certains chez eux diront que c'est un style de vie qu'ils ont choisi, que s'ils sont démunis, s'ils sont sur une liste d'attente, c'est un endroit qu'ils ont choisi, que c'est leur faute.

En cette saison des fêtes, qu'on se regarde, qu'on examine son âme, sa conscience, et qu'on prenne toutes les opportunités pour établir un équilibre. Économiquement, moi je crois que ça a beaucoup de bon sens, que tous participent à la collectivité. Un gouvernement se voit responsable non à l'échelle individuelle, c'est dans la collectivité que le gouvernement voit sa sagesse, professe son programme. C'est la seule façon de le faire ; certainement pas en privilégiant ceux qui en ont plus, parce que faire ceci mène à l'indécence, à l'immoralité. Quand même, nous sommes ici au service des autres, non les autres à notre service. C'est le contraire.

Allez sur les rues sales et transversales, allez voir de vos yeux ce qui se passe un peu chez eux, chez elles, et vous reviendrez enrichis. Chez vous on verra la beauté de l'âme. Vous ferez lumière dans votre milieu.

When the numbers keep rolling in, one would expect to see a noticeable difference, all positive. Money was coming in from all sides. The door at Revenue Ontario was hardly wide enough to accommodate the receipts. Finally the good times had come back. The government said, "We created the climate to make it that way." Well, with their style I'm sure they have a right to claim that they have made a contribution to creating a climate so that entrepreneurial Ontario can create jobs, but it was a global entity as well. It's not all that easy.

Those are supposed to be good times. Well, "good times" means let's all have a good time, not a winner-take-all good time. "Where were you when the good times came by? They passed you by. If you can't succeed during good times, when will you ever succeed?" Oh, maybe if you get a lottery ticket, but unless you win the jackpot you're not likely to succeed. This is not a game of chance. There's an awful lot that could be done, and you do it when times are good.

First, you don't give a tax break that benefits mostly the rich and cabinet ministers, former cabinet ministers and the people they court. You do it by attacking the debt, the deficit first and then the debt, so finally you can say to Ontarians: "The good times have returned. We paid our debt back. We broke away from our chains. Now we're free. Now we can do a lot."

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But in the meantime, this government that calls itself prudent, able and practical will have borrowed over \$20 billion more than when they took office. It makes little sense to me. You go to the banks, you go around the world and borrow \$20 billion, and you still have a debt. Minister, please, does that make sense to you? No, I know you. You pay your debt first. You break away from those shackles and then, ah, a breath of fresh air. Now you can

have some money to return to the middle class, to help the senior citizens, to help the young students with their student loans, to help the poor, to help the sick, the feeble. That's how you use money — a good tool if you know how to use it wisely.

But they spend it on the tax cut, the two-cups-of-coffee tax cut. They're as bad as drunken sailors when it comes to money. No, they're worse, because drunken sailors spend their own money. These people go and borrow, borrow and borrow.

Interjection.

Mr Pouliot: Madam, do you wish to tell me about drunken sailors?

Mrs Helen Johns (Huron): Yes, the \$50 billion you lost.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Come to order.

Mr Pouliot: I have with me the 1997 Ontario budget. It contains some measures, some incentives for small business. I began my remarks this evening by saying that we in the New Democratic Party will always support any initiative that will help create jobs, preferably good, permanent jobs. Our goal is to achieve full employment so that everyone can be contributors and benefactors at the same time.

The engine of the recovery has been that of medium and small business. In fact, that was perhaps your first job, Speaker, because most Ontarians' first jobs was with small business people. Indeed we want to wish them well. I said I would try to be fair. I looked at Bill 164, 199 pages; and there are some small but well-meaning endeavours, some small incentives for business, but there's also about 190 pages which reflect the sins, errors and omissions.

Speaker Stockwell was asked to rule on Bill 164. I don't wish to impute motive, but I know the Speaker could not believe that some of those bills had not been passed yet, weren't law, but these people came up with other bills and said: "We're going to fix the amendments. We were too incompetent at the committee level and we missed the deadline, so we're not going to open the bill." We said: "Speaker Stockwell, why don't we come back here — in a democracy, a constitutional monarchy, be it that the adversarial system is alive and well — and we will debate your new amendments? We're all here for the public good."

But the commissars had heard enough. The brigade went punchy; they went absolutely crazy. They went to the commissars and they said, "Say no; no more debate." My friends from Algoma and Cochrane South spent hours at committee and they wanted to debate. The government said: "No, no, no. We will have Bill 164. We will be devious and hypocritical, because we're calling it An Act to implement job creation measures and other" —

The Speaker: Member for Lake Nipigon, I find that language to be unparliamentary and I'd prefer that you use other language.

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth): Try English or French.

Mr Pouliot: I heard Mr Johnson say, "Try English or French." Sir, I respect you and I respect your opinion. Thank you very kindly.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): This man speaks English without any accent and you have the gall to say that to him?

The Speaker: Order.

Mr Pouliot: Speaker, I've heard the tone. I've read about it. There would be nothing to be gained if I say any more about that.

Mr Gilchrist: Speak Spanish.

Remarks in Spanish.

The Speaker: Member, you're out of order.

Mr Pouliot: Thank you very much.

In a few short minutes — when we refer to it as a missed opportunity, it's because this is not the way to do business. You had on a Monday Bill 160, the education matter, very important indeed — a black day for education, students, parents, taxpayers and those 126,000 community leaders, teachers. The following day you had the downloading, the devolution bill, who pays for what. On the third day, a Wednesday, you had Bill 149, the assessment bill.

I recognize two of those bills right in Bill 164. You see, they blew it. Their incompetence was such that they came up with this document. You had difficulties with it, Speaker Stockwell, and I have a great deal of difficulty, but they had to dress the animal up. They couldn't come up with only a series of amendments. No, they said: "We're going to call it job creation. We'll take the budget book, lift a page or two and put it up front, and then the devil will be in the amendments, the remainder of the document."

It won't suffice. You can't pull the wool over people's eyes. They're going to see right through it. When implementation comes up, then you will begin to see the error of your ways, those 40, 50 and 60 amendments to a bill, because you do sloppy work. You don't know what you're doing. But that's not the end. You have no timetable — you're going full speed — so 40, 50, 60 amendments are not enough. On top of it, you've got to come up with this omnibus bill filled with amendments. There are 199 pages. Why isn't it in Bill 149? Why isn't it in Bill 160? They themselves were rectified, were reviewed, and 40, 50 and 60 amendments were added there too.

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We asked you, Speaker, to rule on this. The other bills were still being pushed through. This is an appendix to the bill; this is an addition. These things should not be allowed to go through. This is bad law. You must have agonized, but the good person you are, you said in your ruling — and I'm sure you had some consultation; you're surrounded by well-meaning people filled with expertise. It's good of you to listen and to do that in the collective. It must have been quite a call. I would have liked to be part, as an observer, of what must have been a very difficult decision, because you don't have to search too much — this thing's out of order, in my opinion. The bills are still going through and you've got some amendments. Anyone

who can read sees the scheme, the fix, knows what those conjurors of illusions are after, and it's very, very basic magic. It's pretty cheap magic. If you were to hire a magician for the anniversary of your son or daughter, you'd have a great deal of difficulty when the bill came in for this kind of cheap trick. I know myself, I would question it, ask for a rebate. I would say I was robbed; I didn't get value for money.

I know you to be a person of honour, Speaker, and therefore I believe in your ruling and I will abide by it with the highest of respect for you and your tenure, sir. However, I still have some difficulty personally in accepting it, because I can see through that thin veil what is being attempted here. They go from a bag of tricks to a bag of snakes and they're at the point now, after two and a half years, where honour has departed them. They have antagonized three quarters of the populace of Ontario. Tomorrow they will scan the phone book to try to find out more people to sock with this kind of legislation.

I'm beyond disappointed with the government. No government is all good or all bad, but I think on the down side they've gone further than has been noted in the annals of Ontario in a long time. Some parts of Bill 164 I like: the incentive to small business. The trick part, I don't like. Yet again, the systematic alienation, the erosion of the middle class, hurting those who are the less fortunate: I as a citizen have difficulty with that.

I want to thank you, Mr Speaker. I will make a recommendation to our caucus that we vote against Bill 164.

The Speaker: Questions and comments?

M. Baird : J'ai bien entendu le discours de mon collègue le député de Lac-Nipigon, un discours intéressant. Mais pour nous de ce côté de la Chambre, entendre un discours de quelqu'un qui s'assit dans le cabinet de M. Rae, un cabinet néo-démocrate qui a gaspillé l'argent comme aucun gouvernement provincial dans ce pays, c'est absolument extraordinaire.

He talks about fiscal responsibility. First of all, if it was Dalton Turn-Back-the-Clock McGuinty who had made that speech, it would be interesting. But to hear a member opposite, a member of a government which brought the deficit to \$11.3 billion a year, doubled the debt in this province in just five years, give a lecture to this government on fiscal responsibility — some would say it would take nerve. I am quite surprised. I don't think we need lectures. Those we should take lectures from are those with a lot of experience who have carefully reviewed these things and have rendered judgements.

I have an interesting article here from the Ottawa Sunday Sun, June 8: "I do believe that all that has taken place is necessary. There are limits to what all governments can spend and borrow." Who said that? Bob Rae. "Harris Right, Rae Says." He claims not to have said it, but the journalist remembers it. Even Bob Rae thinks there are limits to what we can tax and spend.

But the goal can't just be a balanced budget. The goal has to be job creation. We can't simply say: «Attendez, mesdames et messieurs. Vous, les sans-emplois, vous devez attendre le prochain siècle pour avoir un emploi.»

Il y a des personnes qui ont besoin d'un emploi, qui ont besoin d'espoir. C'est important.

Mr Frank Mclash (Kenora): It's always a pleasure to listen to the comments from the member for Lake Nipigon, who is, as you know, a fellow northern member who has represented his riding and has been a member of this House for a great number of years. He certainly points out some of the bents of this government when it comes to wanting to fulfil a promise they made, an ill-conceived promise in terms of giving their friends a 30% income tax reduction in Ontario.

While trying to do that, of course, we're looking at various policies which the member points out quite well have led to a great amount of suffering of the poor and of various people who just cannot make their way to speak to this government, when we have a government here yet bent on a 30% income tax reduction for their friends.

As well, it's always good to listen to the member for Lake Nipigon talk about the lack of knowledge and the lack of interest that the government has in northern Ontario. The minister's parliamentary assistant is from southern Ontario, and his lack of knowledge about what is happening in terms of the natural resources, again, the member for Lake Nipigon points out quite well.

In essence, he's just pointing out the shortfalls of this government in terms of not representing the entire population of the province, but catering to a very small portion of Ontario. As I say, in my riding, anyone making \$500,000 a year is looking forward to their 30% income tax reduction, but there are very few people in the riding of Kenora and very few people in the north who would be making anywhere near that.

I congratulate the member on his comments.

Mr Wildman: I want to congratulate my friend from Lake Nipigon on his presentation, which is as insightful and incisive as usual when he makes a presentation in this House.

I must say, and I say this advisedly, I was most disappointed at the intervention of the member for Perth during my friend's comments. I realize we have give and take in this place and there are back-and-forth interjections and so on. Sometimes they can add to the debate; other times they take significantly away from the debate. I think that was one of the latter.

To suggest that my friend from Lake Nipigon should speak either French or English when he had demonstrated his ability in both of our official languages very well throughout his presentation, and considering that he is one of the most eloquent members of this assembly in both languages — I think it is most unfortunate that we would have that kind of insult thrown across the floor.

I know we are in an evening sitting. I've warned the government about the problems related to evening sittings when they wanted to change the rules and the kind of things that tend to happen in evening sittings. This is a minor example of that. Perhaps the member would want to rethink his situation and might be prepared to proffer an apology to my friend from Lake Nipigon and to all the members of the assembly and all the Franco-Ontarians in

this province who have tremendous respect for my friend, the traditions of the House, and his ability to put forward his view on behalf of his constituents in this place.

The Speaker: Questions and comments?

Hon Margaret Marland (Minister without Portfolio [children's issues]): Since the Speaker allowed the member for Algoma to comment other than on the comments —

The Speaker: It's not the job of the Speaker to determine what the member is speaking to. If you want to stand in your place and place a point of order, you're more than welcome to, and I will take it up.

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Hon Mrs Marland: I'm not raising a point of order. I'm saying that I'm going to make a comment not related to the member for Lake Nipigon's comments, which is what we're supposed to do, since the member for Algoma was given that leeway as well.

I think all of us in this House agree that the member for Lake Nipigon is one of our most articulate members when he's on his feet — not, of course, that we always agree with what he has to say, but his flourish with both official languages is something that I've enjoyed with him since we both were elected at the same time. I also enjoy his humour.

Sometimes, whether it's an afternoon sitting or an evening sitting, members on both sides of the House make comments back and forth, and sometimes they're misinterpreted. I think the comment that was made was misinterpreted, and I don't want someone to be upset unnecessarily for that reason.

I will say on the subject of the bill that as minister for children, I could do a great deal with the \$9 billion we pay out in interest now on the accumulated debt for this province, a debt which unfortunately was doubled by the Liberal government and doubled again by the previous NDP government.

The Speaker: The member for Lake Nipigon has two minutes to respond.

Mr Pouliot: To the members for Nepean, Kenora, Algoma and Mississauga South, thank you for your good response and your kind words as well, very much indeed.

My friend and colleague from Nepean talked about when we were the government. How can he forget? It's only two and a half years ago, but he obviously chooses not to — oh, well. Times were difficult. It was a very acute recession, but we did not see 85,000 of our faithful, dedicated civil servants withdraw their labour by way of a legal work stoppage, and we did not see 126,000 teachers engage in 10 days of protest, all this happening in the face of your government during what you refer to as the economic recovery; nor did we show the door to 14,000 civil servants, deprive them of the right, the privilege, to earn a living.

Bill 164 is a load. It is very difficult to digest. This is the pay-with-no-say bill. We repeated that the devil was in the details. This is a façade; the façade is a small package of incentives. What's in the bill is a whole series of punitive amendments. Let's recognize it for what it is. This is a

scheme, a cheap trick. The cover is nice — it's like Bre-X — but there's very little gold inside.

The Speaker: Further debate?

Mrs Johns: It's a pleasure to speak to this bill this evening. I want to first talk about Bill 164, and maybe I should talk a little about the process here.

People might wonder why we're not speaking directly to a bill. I want to remind the people of Ontario that this is a budget bill, which allows a little more leeway to speak about issues that may financially involve the province. So we have heard today what the member for Lake Nipigon believes are some of the issues that are affecting the province from a financial basis. But I'd like to say that I see the picture in a very different light, of course. I believe the province has a much rosier look than it did two and a half years ago, and I'm going to go on to explain why some of this happened, but first I think it's important to talk about Bill 164.

Bill 164 is a result of the budget that was introduced by Ernie Eves in 1997, and it's our commitment to talk about research and development, to talk about youth employment; it's our commitment to talk about new technology in Ontario. We are responding to the things we think are important in the province. We are responding to economic growth and our need for economic growth. We are responding to our need for employment to be generated in the province — not like other governments believed it should happen, that is, to go out and create some new public sector jobs, but to ask the private sector to move forward and create jobs, to feel that our Ontario is a good place to start to have jobs. We have tried to do that in the bill.

We're trying to create new, leading-edge technology jobs. The member for Nepean, who is sitting beside me today, has a great deal to say about high-technology jobs because in his community those jobs are being created, and we need to find a way to put people into those jobs.

We also need to deal with youth unemployment, and this bill starts to tackle that issue. There is no question that in Ontario, yesterday and today, there are many youth who are unemployed, and we have to do something to try to stimulate the private sector to hire young people.

I am going to run through some of the tax credits being introduced in this bill that will allow some of these activities to generate new opportunities in the province. We have asked that there be access to capital for small businesses. As a newly elected member in 1995, one of the issues I've dealt with is people coming into my office consistently and saying, "I want to start a new business and I am unable to arrange funding." I am sure that most members in this Legislature have had to deal with that problem.

The government has tried, over successive budgets, to deal with that issue. In this budget we talked about a small business investment tax credit for financial institutions. I want to stop right there and say that this is to entice a financial institution to lend to small businesses, to lend investments of \$50,000 or less to small businesses. We need to have that in the province, because the backbone of

the province is small businesses. We have made some enticements to get financial institutions to do so, and you mustn't forget the financial information we input as a result of the previous budget.

Community small business investment funds: We're encouraging communities to partner with financial institutions to have labour-sponsored investment funds and local investors to provide greater access to capital for small businesses so that we entice financial institutions to take into consideration the plight of small businesses within our communities.

We also believe we have to promote cultural industries within the province. We have seen over the last 10 or 12 years that there has been a focus on culture within our communities. We've tried to do more, and I admit that the NDP and the Liberals started this process to do more to create opportunities in culture for our communities.

In this budget, we said we were going to enhance the tax credit for book publishing. We want Canadian authors to feel some incentive to write. We want to ensure that Canadian publishers publish Canadian-authored books. For the first time, we're saying this tax credit is expanded to children's books, expanded to educational titles. We're trying to increase the depth of our ability to publish books that are Canadian material, Ontario material, in Ontario.

We are also trying to enhance the Ontario film and television tax credit because we want to foster a vibrant, world-class industry right here in Ontario. Before I came to Queen's Park, I don't think I understood how much the film industry does to create jobs within our community of Ontario. As I came down Avenue Road today, I saw the trailers and trailers that were there for the filming of a movie. We need to boost film production and the jobs associated with film production within our province.

One of the things that Ontario has become very good at is computer animation and special effects. We have worked with Sheridan College to produce and expand and create jobs within this growing, dynamic market sector. What has happened is that graduates from the colleges in this area have had no trouble in obtaining jobs, and that is a good thing to deal with when we're dealing with our youth having substantial unemployment.

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We also want to foster research and development and create innovation in Ontario, and we have done tax credits to do that. We know that research and development in the province are what makes the province tick. We need to have new research going on — the colleges and universities have asked for that — and we need to have businesses searching for new opportunities to enlarge our marketplace.

The minister responsible for children, who just spoke, would be most interested in the increase in the child care tax credit. What we've said is that we're going to make a new investment of \$40 million in working families and their children in Ontario. We believe we will assist about 90,000 families, and about 125,000 children are expected to benefit from this tax credit.

One of the things I'm the most interested in and like the most about this budget is our youth employment and small business job creation tax credits. What we have tried to do in this specific area is to find opportunities so we can work towards finding more jobs for the youth in our province. We have done graduate transition tax credits which will help 45,000 unemployed graduates find needed work. We have also come up with a cooperative education tax credit which tries to help young people move into leading-edge technology fields. We believe this is where the growth is in job opportunities and we're trying very hard to find ways to get good-paying jobs for the people of Ontario.

Mr Wildman: Spend, spend, spend.

Mrs Johns: What I see in this budget bill is jobs, jobs, jobs. What is important about what we're trying to do here is that we can already begin to see the results in the province. I have a document called Positive Economic Signs in my hand, which talks about Ontario's social assistance caseloads falling in November. "In November, Ontario's social assistance caseloads declined by 4,400 cases. Since June 1995, the number of people depending on social assistance has fallen by 250,000 people, a decline of 18.6%." The opposition will say, of course, that all these people are still unemployed. I think we all know that the fact is that more and more people are working in this province.

We also can see from the economy that we have a GNP increasing at substantial rates. For the third quarter of this year we had a GDP factor of costs rising by 4.8% on an annual rate. We also had gains in the last quarter of 5.1%, and for the first three quarters of this year we're at 3.8%. This is a substantial increase in economic activity.

The member across said, "Spend, spend, spend." That's exactly what consumers are doing. They are spending, spending, spending, because they believe the economy is vibrant and it will continue to get stronger and stronger.

Private sector economists are becoming increasingly optimistic about where our province is headed. I have the Bank of Montreal saying, "Ontario's economy became red-hot in 1997 and is likely to remain so through 1998, growing at a 5% pace in both years." Scotiabank says: "Ontario's economic engine is moving into high gear. While exports will benefit from solid US activity, the domestic economy is revving up." We're not the only people who are saying it's important to have an increased economy. This increased economy will lead to job creation, not only for our youth but for the people of Ontario. It's time for jobs to be created.

I want to talk about the jobs that were created in November. Ontario gained 13,000 jobs in November. In November, Ontario's total employment rose 13%, following some job losses and some job gains. In fact, we had a net increase in jobs created in the month of November. The unemployment rate eased slightly, it's down a little bit, and we'll continue to work on that, but to do that, we have to get the youth of Ontario to work, for the first time in many cases, and back to work in other cases.

One of the important statistics that I think the people of Ontario would like to hear about is Ontario youth employment. We had 4,300 new jobs created in the month of November in youth employment. It's important for us. The unemployment rate for youth has fallen from 15.6% to 15.4%. That's the lowest level in over a year. I'm not saying it's perfect. That's way too high, no question, and we have to keep working on it. But this budget bill will help to entice small businesses to hire young people, will entice them to look at opportunities for young people, and that's what we need in Ontario right now. The youth are our future and we have to find opportunities for them. Government cannot make jobs for these people. They need to be trained in the private sector. They need to work in small businesses, to find the opportunities that will give them a long life in the workforce.

One of the other interesting statistics that I think people would want to hear about is that Ontario's Help Wanted index was up in the month of November. Ontario's Help Wanted index climbed by 8% in November. The Help Wanted index has risen steadily over the past year, up 24.3%, reaching its highest level in October. It's important to recognize that there are starting to be jobs out there. We have to work towards getting jobs for the people of Ontario, and this budget continues to do that.

Mr Wildman: Mostly part-time.

Mrs Johns: No, that would be incorrect. The member across says, "Mostly part-time." There are many jobs in all factors that are important to recognize.

There is also optimism in the province. Confidence about the province is at a nine-year high. Ontario's retail sales rose 2.8% in 1997. All around we're starting to see the results of the Mike Harris government: We're starting to see employment up; we're starting to see unemployment fall; we're starting to see jobs for our youth in Ontario; we're starting to see consumer confidence; we're starting to see retail sales increase. All of that lets Ontario be the economic engine.

When I was much younger and took a stockbroker course, one of the things they said was the leading indicator in terms of where the Ontario marketplace was going was housing sales. We can see from housing sales that the Ontario market remains robust, and it will create jobs. For every house that is built, it creates something like 1,000 or 2,000 jobs, and that's important in Ontario. It is very important that over the first 10 months of 1997, all area starts in Ontario are running 29% ahead of last year's pace. We have growth in the economy, we have a lot of confidence and we have a community that is starting to see the results of where we've been.

We still have a way to go. In the Common Sense Revolution, we said we would create 725,000 jobs in the period between the two elections, and we have to work at that, but we're starting to see the results of our hard work and of a strong economy and confidence in the government and in the province.

The government's plan to ensure that there is more opportunity and more jobs in the province is starting to work. I think we all recognize that all of us have to work to-

gether to create opportunities. In the past seven months 43,000 jobs have been created for the youth in Ontario, and that's a substantial part of Canada's youth employment increase, so I think we have to be very proud that we're leading the way in youth opportunities. I think we also have to be very proud that we're working to find new ways to stimulate that and to continue to have growth within the province.

I'm going to close with the fact that I think this bill is important for our youth. I think it's important for the province to have some tax credits that allow businesses and individuals to find opportunities within the province. I look forward to everyone approving this bill with unanimous consent as we move through the ensuing days.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Questions or comments?

Mr Mike Colle (Oakwood): I want to commend the member for Huron for trying to defend her government's intentions and record. She talks about jobs, but she knows full well that the tragedy of the jobs that have supposedly been created over the last couple of years has been that they have been essentially part-time jobs, temporary jobs with no security, generally low-paying. That is where the real gap is.

Young people are the ones who suffer most from these part-time, low-paying jobs whereby young people are just used essentially — and it's not the small employer that's doing it; it's the major corporations that are not fulfilling their obligations to society. Their profits are going through the roof. The banks' profits are obscene. There's nothing in here about maybe even a hint of controlling the bank's multibillion-dollar profits, not a hint of it, because we know that this government primarily protects those that have.

What isn't in this Bill 164 is protection and encouragement for those who don't have: the pensioners, the youth, the older workers who are being thrown out into the dustbin because they're not of value to the gobbling corporations.

I think it's the duty of government to make corporations aware of their civic and moral responsibility. They will do it, but this government is refusing to do that. It's easy to pick on teachers, easy to pick on welfare recipients, easy to pick on caretakers in schools. You'll never ever hear this government take on the big oil companies or the big banks — never — because they're too cosy with them. That's what I wish the member for Huron would speak about.

Mr Bisson: To the member for Huron and her comments: I guess what bugged me with the most about the presentation is how government members — and I remember how the Tories, as the third party when they were in opposition to our government, used to go on at length about how government can't create jobs. They went on at length during the election about how government can't create jobs. In fact, after they got elected, they got rid of all the economic development programs that were in place at the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines and

the Ministry of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism, and others, and then had the gall to stand in this House and say, "All of a sudden I found out after I was elected that all these people who were coming in to try to arrange loans to set up businesses can't get access to capital." It's your government that cut those very grants and loans. We've been getting those kinds of requests within our office at Cochrane South.

The other thing is this myth that the government tries to put on that only since 1995 has there been any kind of economic activity in Ontario and that nothing happened before that, like before 1995 the province didn't exist. I want to go through a couple of things that happened just in my riding from 1990 to 1995 when it came to economic investment.

Malette waferboard built a brand-new plant: \$60 million. Dome created a brand new mine: \$250 million at the open-pit operation. Echo Bay: \$150 million. Kidd Creek: a brand-new indium plant. Abitibi: \$150 million on a TMP plant and \$20 million on tertiary treatment. Northland Power: a \$75 million-investment in a power plant in Iroquois Falls. Battle Mountain Gold: \$120 million — all during the time of an NDP government.

For this member of the government to get up and all of a sudden try to say there was no kind of economic activity going back before 1995 is a stretch at best. I really take offence at the kind of comments she was making.

Hon Mrs Marland: I would like to compliment the member for Huron on her comments on this bill. Obviously, as the minister for children, which includes youth, I'm very happy to hear her making a strong emphasis for youth employment. I appreciate her focus on something that all of the people in this government recognize as being very important.

Interestingly enough, when we talk about where we are with jobs and the economy generally in this province, we can be very grateful for the fact that we have now not the government creating jobs, because we've had two previous governments in this province that have job creation by the government spending money creating jobs; what we're doing is creating the economic environment in the private sector that is generating the jobs. Those are the kind of jobs this province is looking for.

As long as the policies of this government improve the economic climate, the recovery of our economy is guaranteed. All we will have, fortunately, are more and more private sector jobs. When we have private sector jobs, we have employment for families. Parents in those families, in turn, make a better living situation for the children in those families. That's something that is obviously a very major priority for our government and that I'm particularly proud of because we have been concerned about the future for children in this province. As long as their parents can get jobs, we know their future will be guaranteed.

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): I'd like to thank the member for Huron for her comments. Although I don't agree with much of what she said, I appreciate the amount of effort she put into her presentation.

I want to focus on job creation because she spent a little bit of time on it. I want the people in the House here this evening and the people in Ontario to understand that right now there are more people unemployed in Ontario than were unemployed in June 1995. That's not a Liberal statistic. That's not a third-party statistic. That's not a government statistic. That's a StatsCan statistic. That's reality. There's no political spin on that. That in fact is reality.

The government is way behind on their promise to create 729,000 jobs — way behind. At this point in time, they should have created X number of jobs; they're way behind that. Even the most ardent economist who supports the government realizes now that the government isn't going to reach their job creation mark. That's going to be another promise broken by this government.

Youth unemployment is at 17.5%, I believe, but in northern Ontario it's much higher than that.

What do we see in Ontario? We see a government that isn't living up to the promises they made with regard to job creation. But also we're seeing health care in transition, we're seeing municipalities in transition, we're seeing education in transition.

The member for Huron spoke about creating the proper atmosphere. I don't think that when you have this much confusion and this much transition taking place, we are creating the proper environment for job creation.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Huron, you have two minutes.

Mrs Johns: I'd like to thank the members who responded to me in the question period, including the member for Oakwood.

The member for Cochrane South, I would like to say that I find it interesting that my comments have, as you say, "bugged" you. Maybe there's some kind of a guilty conscience there because of the fact that we lost 10,000 jobs during your tenure as government and you're feeling somewhat guilty about that. From that point I'll say that, although I might bug you, it's important for the people of Ontario to recognize that during the tenure of the NDP government — and you can blame it on economic recessions, you can blame it on whatever you like — there was a net loss in job positioning for 10,000 people.

I would also like to say that before I came to this job I worked in the accounting world. I saw a number of small businesses that were trying hard to get loans in Ontario and the difficulties they were having. The member for Cochrane South talked about how this phenomenon has just happened in the last three or four years. I was in accounting some 20 years ago; this has been a difficult problem for small businesses for a long period of time. We need to correct this, and we move towards this every day as we try to make changes to ensure that financial institutions will lend to these small businesses.

To many of the businesses the members opposite talk about, a \$50,000 loan isn't going to make a difference. But to someone like me or someone in this House who might start a small business, \$50,000 can get them started in business. That's a great incentive for them. I don't think

there's a person contemplating starting a small business in Ontario who would be complaining about a little enticement to the bank to make sure they loan to small businesses in the province.

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The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Colle: I think deep in her heart the member for Huron understands that one of the main inequities we have in Ontario and Canada is the fact that our superbanks are too super, too big and have too much control. She knows that's one of the areas where maybe her Premier could perhaps use some moral suasion to get the banks to help small business.

I listened to Mr Conacher, who is one of the bank watchdogs federally — he's in Ottawa — and he was commenting on the fact that in the United States they monitor, state by state, the amount of loans that go out to small business. They keep a record and a report card to make sure the banks are helping small business. In Canada and in Ontario we don't do that. There's nobody monitoring the banks. Maybe the minister of consumer affairs can do that, monitor the big banks, see how much money they do give to small business.

You still get it every day: You talk to a small business person and they still say: "Government still is not helping me. I still can't pay my provincial sales tax. I can't make ends meet. I'm trying to be independent." Small businesses are still not getting that help. I mean a family operation. I'm not talking about car dealerships as small business; I'm talking about the mom-and-pop operations. We have a lot of those and they're all struggling.

In terms of Bill 164, ironically one of the things this bill is doing is setting up the framework to abolish and privatize one aspect of Ontario's outreach to small business and individuals through Ontario savings and loan corporations. That is going to be privatized; it's going to go out to the big business people. That is where I see no hint of really trying to help the little people who need help financially and economically.

In terms of the philosophy of this budget bill, it's an omnibus bill, and this government, as you know, loves jamming bills through, putting things together, railroading bills through as quickly as they can. One aspect of this bill which is quite interesting also is that it deals with amendments to previous bills; it's a cleanup bill. We couldn't see those amendments when we were dealing with Bill 160, for instance, yet we find them in this bill. That's quite unusual, but it's part of the style of doing things so quickly and then thinking about the consequences and pretending they don't exist until afterwards. This is part of the style.

Also, the philosophy is quite clear. As you know, this government claims that government cannot create jobs. They're saying that government has to create an atmosphere and that's different from what anybody else did. But there's no government that preceded this government, whether NDP or Liberal, that didn't do the same thing. This government is doing the same thing: They're priming

the pump. It's pure Keynesian economics they're practising.

Instead of creating traditional government projects like the Tennessee Valley Authority or building highways across Ontario using government money in government projects of that magnitude or building hospitals, this government is priming the pump through its tax cut. They admit that. They're spending \$5 billion of their money and they're giving it out just as if it was any socialist or Liberal or NDP government that was priming the pump by building government projects, whether it be dams or setting up apprenticeship programs or providing so-called government jobs. They're doing the same thing. They're putting in money and they think they can best create jobs with their money by giving it in a tax cut. That is how they are priming the pump. Keynes, if he were still alive, would be very happy with this approach, but as we know, most economists will tell you that Keynesian economics don't work any more.

This government claims, "Oh yes, this five billion bucks we're spending on priming the pump is going to work." What has worked for this government is not that \$5-billion expenditure in the tax cut, which most classical economists tell you is foolhardy. They tell you what is really working in Ontario is the low interest rates whereby Ontarians in the manufacturing field, especially auto parts and the automobile industry, can export their automobiles across the border to the United States — free trade, low interest rates, the booming American economy. That's what Mike Harris economics are living off: the booming American economy. If the NDP had a booming economy during their period in office, they probably would have done much better economically; but if Mike Harris and his whiz kids were here in 1990-91, they probably would have had a horrible time dealing with that recession in 1990-91. They couldn't have dealt with it either.

It's easy for the government now in power to say, in hindsight, "We're great." But in 1990, when the recession hit, very few governments were able to cope; no matter how intelligent and how capable they were, they could not cope. For this government to slam previous governments holus-bolus is unfair. Previous governments made mistakes and they also did some good things. This government prides itself on being perfect. They never admit to mistakes. They claim they are responsible for all the good things and they never make mistakes. That is what's so scary.

We've got this huge bill before us that affects everything and it's very detailed. The most ominous thing in this whole bill, which sort of labels what this government is like, is they've got a clause in schedule F, section 9, which even frightens that revolutionary group of people who are the Association of Municipal Clerks and Treasurers, this wild-eyed group of radicals that meets in the basement of some church up in Willowdale. They are afraid of this bill. Because you know what this government has even gone as far as to do, very explicitly? They are so worried about people perhaps questioning this government's new powers. As you know, this government has now the power

to set property tax rates. They've got \$6 billion in property taxes they're going to set behind closed doors. Not only are they going to set the rates without debate, by regulation, they are also saying, "The minister may require that the notice be in a form approved by the minister." That's a tax bill. "A municipality shall not vary the form unless the variation is expressly authorized by the minister."

It's so concerned that some municipality in Wawa or Cornwall or Sudbury may vary the tax bill, they have to say, "You must have the express authorization of the minister himself if you want to change the wording or the format of a tax bill." Talk about centralized, overbearing, authoritarian government; they are now ordering expressly that you can't even change the format of the tax bill. It's got to be one size fits all, approved by the minister.

2020

Then they even go further; that's not enough. Subsection 5 says, "The minister may, by regulation, prescribe the information that must or that may be included on the notice. A municipality shall not include other information on the notice unless expressly authorized to do so by the minister." So the Minister of Municipal Affairs is going to be checking every tax bill that goes out from every municipality in this province because, in essence, as I said, the revolutionary association of clerks and treasurers says what in effect has happened is that this government has taken over property taxation in this province. They have dramatically overhauled it. They have taken it over, where they control it. Ken Cousineau, who is the executive director of AMCTO, the clerks and treasurers, says that the cumulative effects of 106, 149, 160, 164 — because these bills are all linked; it's part of this upheaval — is that we no longer have a municipal property tax system. So the people of Ontario will know that if they've got a problem with their tax bill, if it's too high, too low, whatever, it is now Mike Harris that you call for that tax bill because, in essence, they've taken over property taxes in this province.

Cousineau goes on to say that we have a provincial tax system administered by the municipalities. They decide, the municipalities decide, very little at this point because the decision, even down to what's on the bill that goes to every household, is now decided by the minister himself, and he can change that by regulation. The province controls the education tax. It determines classes and subclasses of land. It allocates tax ratios and transition ratios, and now it may determine what will go on the tax notice itself.

Talk about big government, intrusive government. This Bill 164, along with all the other bills they have been ramming through day after day after day, is in essence this attempt to control all aspects of property taxation in this province, of education, of municipal services. They have in essence taken over. As I've said, when you have a problem with your taxes, call Mike Harris, because he's essentially in charge. If you don't like what you pay for education in your taxes, call Mike Harris or call Dave Johnson, because they are now in total control and the

municipalities are just going to be there trying to do the little they can in damage control.

The other aspects of this bill — again, as I said, essentially it's an omnibus bill which covers a host of budgetary proposals put forth by Mr Eves earlier — are also very, very difficult for the general public to deal with. The reason we have this system in Ontario is that there are checks and balances where bills come before this House, the House can ask questions, committees can ask questions, and the public can get engaged in the bill.

I wonder how many people out there in Ontario really know what's in Bill 164. They've just been spending the last three months trying to find out what was in Bill 160, which was such a complex, detailed piece of legislation. Now do you think they have the time or the interest or the will after being sledgehammered by Bill 160 to find out what's in Bill 164? Most Ontarians won't have that time, yet this bill is going to be rammed through again. It's going to impact on all kinds of Ontarians, all kinds of tax ratios, tax provisions. And this is just the bill. I can imagine when the regulatory powers come out, the regulations passed by this minister for 164.

The people of Ontario aren't well served when this government goes so fast, because they don't get a chance to find out how these bills are going to affect them. They are too mature just to be told, "Trust us." Most Ontarians want to have an idea of what's being passed in this Legislature. They want to have debate and scrutiny. That is what the tradition of this province has been. This government has said: "We don't care about that. We've got to jam everything through."

A rush to what? This mad rush to what, to achieve what? So they can cut, so they can reshape, so they can turn the whole province upside-down to achieve what end? What is the ultimate end of this bill and all these bills? What is the ultimate end? If it's just that stupid, crazy tax cut, it's not worth it. You could have stimulated the economy without it, because you had the American economy booming, because you've got the low interest rates. You could have done it without that. Is it punitive? Do you want to punish people some more? Do you want to keep on hammering at those you feel are not upcoming or promising citizens? I don't know what the motives are. Maybe you should ask some of the whiz kids: What's this all about? What are we doing this for?

If you ask about the youth, you know, here's a government that keeps talking about jobs. We haven't seen in two years any substantive initiatives to help young people get jobs. All we've seen is this government tearing apart and denigrating their education system and saying, "You're not educated; you don't have the skills." That's all they keep telling young people. Before you know it, if you keep telling young people that — "You don't have the skills. Your schools are no good and your teachers are no good" — they're going to start to believe that malarkey. Instead of encouraging young people, instead of encouraging our schools to educate and keep doing the good things and do better — you'd get a lot more out of our kids, you'd get a lot more out of our schools and a lot

more out of this province with a carrot rather than a stick. But this government's approach is always with a stick.

They're at war with everybody in the province. They've got to have conflict. They thrive on conflict. Why the conflict all the time? Why this war with the teachers? To what end, if you had the end of putting more money, more investment in education? We found out through Veronica Lacey's contract what your motives were. The contract was written specifically, like this Bill 164 is, saying that Veronica Lacey would be hired on the basis — her performance contract said that she would take \$667 million out. You were exposed that it wasn't about making the system better; it was about taking the money out. Who do you take the money out of? You take the money out of those kids who need that education to get those good jobs and to get a better future.

If you talk about high-tech, I talked to a person who just got back from going to Bulgaria, Romania, Germany, Yugoslavia and Turkey. They are going there recruiting young people from their universities to come here and work in Canada. That's shameful. This government should instead be educating young people in this province to do those jobs. Put your money into our schools and universities so that you won't have Canadians head-hunting in Bulgaria to fill jobs in Ottawa. That's what's happening right now. This government should put its money where its mouth is, put the money into universities, into our high schools, into our grade schools, into our junior kindergarten programs so we don't have to go head-hunting in Bulgaria to fill jobs in Ontario.

That isn't in Bill 164, and that is the tragedy of the Mike Harris economic program. It's punitive. It is not innovative. It is reactionary. It believes that by cutting and by throwing out crumbs to people they favour or sectors they favour, they're going to create jobs.

It doesn't work that way, because all you've created in the last two years is turmoil, confrontation, and people who are saying, "We never knew that these were what we elected." They thought they were electing the Davis/Robarts type of Conservatives who were going to be talking to people, who were going to be listening, who were going to be admitting mistakes. Instead, what we got is some government that came out of who knows where that has an answer for everything, that picks enemies week by week and vilifies them, and then says, "We're going to make up and then we're going to be okay."

2030

People are not that naïve. They've caught on to the game. They are saying, "We are mature taxpayers. When we vote for something, we expect you to respect our vote. We want to be listened to. We want to be at least given all the information," and "all the information" means an objective dissemination of information. How much information do the people in this province have about this bill? We pass bills by the cartload around here. How can that consumer in Ontario be well informed? They can't be. There's too much, too fast.

The property tax system that they're setting up is just one example. If this government really cared about the

small person in property taxation, now that they've introduced market value across Ontario, they could have at least said that if you have a small business, you've got a little pizzeria, you've got a shoemaker's shop, you've got a restaurant, you've got an older house where you fix it up, you put some money into it and you improve the value of the house, they won't increase your taxes because you invested in your shoemaker's shop, your restaurant or your home. No, this government continues on an antiquated system that if you repair or upgrade your home, renovate it or your business, they come along with market value assessment and they're going to increase your taxes. That is punishment.

Why wouldn't Bill 164 have a provision that said, "If you fix up your home or your business and you make an improvement to it, it doesn't mean a higher assessment"? That is still part of 164 and this assessment system in this province, which goes back to the days of Oliver Cromwell. That is archaic; it's not progressive.

There's no innovation in this bill whatsoever. Let's do something that's at least trying to help the little person who's trying to contribute a little bit to Ontario. That's what should be in 164.

The Acting Speaker: Questions or comments?

Mr Wildman: While there was much in the member for Oakwood's comments that I found interesting and which I could support, I found it curious that I happened to be reading this biography of Bonaparte as he was making his presentation. I have a quote in here on page 100 which was written by Napoleon's private secretary, Bourrienne. He was describing Bonaparte's view of people, and he said that Bonaparte had "a preference for those who cleverly defended an absurd proposition," as opposed to those who simply applied reason and logic to do so.

It reminded me of the member for Oakwood's presentation, particularly when he talked about the problems that government had in the early 1990s. He said that "Even" — I think that was the word he used — "the NDP could have done better if there had been better economic times." That's a particularly condescending and ridiculous comment to make.

I would think that "even" the federal Liberal Party in bad times would have difficulties. I think "even" Mr Chrétien and Mr Martin would have difficulty when faced with the kind of usurious interest rates that we faced thanks to the Mulroney Conservative government in the early 1990s. I think "even" the Liberals would have difficulty providing a balanced budget, considering the ability they demonstrated in the 1970s and 1980s at the federal level for escalating the public debt in this province. Even the Liberals might have some difficulty balancing the budget in the 1990s.

Mr Jack Carroll (Chatham-Kent): Listening to the comments from the member for Oakwood reminded me of the introduction to the Lone Ranger movies of years ago: "Return with us now to those thrilling days of yesteryear." His argument was totally for a return to the status quo.

Mr Baird: Turn back the clock.

Mr Carroll: Turn back the clock. Don't make any changes. It's interesting. He talked about, and I quote him, "the stupid, crazy tax cut."

In the 10 years that preceded our arrival here in this lovely chamber, the party that the member for Oakwood is a member of and the party that now sits as the third party raised taxes in our province 65 times. There wasn't a single time during that process that anybody questioned any of those stupid, crazy tax increases, but now we elect a government who on behalf of the taxpayers of the province are instituting what the member for Oakwood calls "stupid, crazy" tax cuts. I do not understand how he can stand in his place in this House and talk about a tax cut on behalf of the taxpayers of our province being stupid and crazy.

He also talked about the new tax form that's being sent out. The new tax form is designed to be transparent so that the people of our province, the taxpayers, regardless of where they live, can understand it. It's the same tax form everywhere. We have said all along that municipalities have the right to include some additional information in that tax bill if they choose to. That is their right. It has always been their right, and we have not taken that right away from them. It would be nice if the member for Oakwood would understand that particular issue and get his facts straight, and if he would stop referring to our tax cut as "stupid" and "crazy."

Mr Bartolucci: I would like to thank the member for Oakwood. I'll try to spend the time with my remarks not zeroing in on one word, "even," or two words, "stupid" and "crazy." Let's talk about what he really said.

What he was telling the government members and the people of Ontario was that there's a fear out there that this government is basing its policy without the proper amount of public input, without the proper amount of public debate. That's what he's saying out there. The people of Ontario want the opportunity to debate and have input before the government rams through legislation. That's what the member for Oakwood was really saying. He brought out specific examples that showed exactly that taking place with this bill because of this government's desire to force through legislation in large chunks all at the same time. That's not good for democracy.

I'm not telling the government members anything they don't know. Certainly both opposition parties have been telling you repeatedly over the course of the last two years that you're moving too quickly, you're not involving the people in the process, and what's happening is that whether the decisions ultimately are good or bad is not important: There are no checks, there is no balance, and that causes concern for the average Ontarian.

I don't know when you're going to get the message, but you should understand that people will not stand for that type of government when they go to the polls the next time.

Mr Wayne Lessard (Windsor-Riverside): The member for Oakwood made some interesting comments when he talked about how this government giving a break to their big money friends isn't necessarily going to lead

the job creation in the province and encourage banks to make loans to small businesses.

He also referred to this as an omnibus bill. You can see how big it is and imagine how many things are buried deep within that bill. Part of the bill is to fix up previous mistakes that have been made by this government in other legislation.

He also exposed the myth that somehow the current Tory job creation measures are different from some of job creation measures that were embarked upon by previous Liberal and NDP governments. But we have to ask ourselves, who is going to pay for the Tory job creation measures and who is going to benefit?

This is a government that claims they never make mistakes, that they're always right, but we know this bill is going to be fixing some mistakes, some in Bill 160, which hadn't even passed before this bill came in with amendments to try and fix up some of those mistakes. He said that many people were still struggling to try and figure out what was in Bill 160 before this bill came along and that most people don't know what's in it.

It's important, and he made a good point, that this government really needs to slow down, give people an opportunity to have some input on bills like Bill 164 and stop ramming through legislation. They really need some public hearings on this bill. I would encourage government members to recommend those, because at the end of the day, backbenchers for the Tories are going to wonder why they were ramming through this legislation so quickly, and they're going to decide that it really wasn't worth it.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Oakwood, you have two minutes.

2040

Mr Colle: I want to thank my colleagues for their comments. I may disagree with some of them, but I certainly thank them.

To the member for Algoma, that's the last time I compliment the NDP. Never again. It's dangerous ground, thin ice. Never again.

To the member for Chatham-Kent, it's interesting. As you know, the reason the tax cut is stupid is because even Ralph Klein said it's stupid to give a tax cut before you reduce your debt and deficit. He said it was stupid. Conservative economists have said, "Don't give a tax cut before you get rid of the deficit." Conservative economists have said: "It's kind of stupid to give the tax cut when you have to raise user fees and when you have to raise property taxes. That's doesn't make sense. That's kind of stupid." The tax cut doesn't cut it with a lot of Conservatives too, and it's stupid to a lot of Conservatives when you've got a deficit to deal with.

I want to thank the member for Sudbury for his usual insightful comments. Coming from the north, I think he can see through this Tory haze in the south. He knows the reality of what's going on here, and the smoke and mirrors don't work with the northerners, that's for sure.

I certainly concur with the member for Windsor-Riverside that a lot of people have a hard time catching up to all this blitzkrieg of legislation. It's so much, so fast

that the average person will never know what bills are being passed. It's a tragedy that they're doing things so fast.

In summary, I just want to say that I think the rationale for this is founded on principles that are not sound, in that you wreak all this havoc on this province, you close hospitals, you're taking teachers out of schools. That is something this bill doesn't correct and, therefore, this whole program needs to be corrected. This isn't doing it.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I appreciate the opportunity to join in the debate, even with what little limited time the government now allows for members to speak.

I want to pick up on the issue of the tax cut, because certainly the government backbenchers have not got the message other than the one that comes out of their whip's office and the laboratory of their spin doctors that tax cuts are wonderful things for Ontarians. Of course, the reality is that it is a wonderful thing if you're in that group of very special Ontarians who make a whole pile of money already. If you're already making a wallop of money, and I'm talking serious coin, if you're making \$200,000, \$300,000, \$400,000, \$500,000-plus, this 30% tax cut is literally worth its weight in gold.

But I defy any of the backbenchers on the government side, on the very few occasions when you actually do come out of your bunker and go out into public or, God forbid, stand in front of a public meeting — if there's enough room for the citizens after you make room for OPP bodyguards — and ask the people in the room, and I'm talking about the general public, not your special interest groups that you like to speak to, chambers of commerce and the like, but real ordinary, hardworking, middle-class family people, if you ask them what they are getting out of the 30% tax cut, the reality is that, if they're lucky, they're getting a couple of cups of coffee a month — if they're lucky.

What's the price they're paying for that tax cut and the other tax measures that are in Bill 164, where again you're taking care of your friends? There are a few other little crumbs in here but nothing that amounts to the kind of serious benefit to the very, very wealthy and privileged in our society. What's the benefit to the average person? A couple of cups of coffee. What's the cost? Bill 160, a devastating attack on our education system, as your government finally fessed up to during the early days of the political protest by the teachers, and God bless them for doing it; the almost \$700 million that you're taking out of the education system, over and above what you have already taken out, and you still haven't had the guts to offer up what the formula is going to be for the stub year, which takes effect early next year, weeks away. I can only assume that you're hoping to get through the House here as quickly as possible and leave little time for us to grill you on behalf of those working middle-class families and what's happening to their education system.

They're losing their education system to pay for your tax cuts so they can get a couple of cups of coffee in

benefit, if they're lucky. Of course, on the other side of the fence, those that I spoke of earlier — and there aren't many, which is part of the problem; it would be nice if there was maybe a little more sharing of what we have — but for those who are lucky enough to be making the \$200,000, \$300,000, \$400,000, \$500,000-plus or the very serious money where we're talking millions of dollars of income every year, they can afford to take care of their kids by sending them off to private school. That's not a problem. Hell, your tax cut alone would probably pay for that in one year, just the first instalment.

But the backbenchers continue to stand up and think that by the end of this term average Ontarians will not have woken up to the fact that this great wonderful world of milk and honey that the Tories talk about is not their world, and it isn't. You talk about creating jobs. This Bill 164 is going to create jobs. Today we see in the Toronto Star, "End Youth EI Premiums to Create Jobs, Eves Urges." What kind of jobs? Part-time, temporary, weakened Employment Standards Act? Minimal health services available in the future, property taxes that are going through the roof.

I want to read what the Canadian Council on Social Development said about jobs, particularly as it relates to young people, in a report released today. Katharine Scott, the council's research director — this also was reported in the Toronto Star today and in the Globe and Mail and the other major papers across the province — the report says, "Fewer young people have good jobs that offer decent wages, benefits and full-time hours than was the case a generation ago." Decent wages, decent benefits, full-time hours: those are exactly the jobs that you're eliminating to pay for your tax cut.

Teachers make a decent wage. So they should. You're eliminating thousands of those jobs. Nurses barely make a decent wage compensable for the work and training that they have to have and increasing at that. Those are decent jobs. The thousands and thousands of other public sector jobs that each of you so proudly pops up in this place and says, "We've cut all those jobs out of here," those are the very decent full-time, decent wages, decent benefit jobs that are being talked about in terms of the challenges and the worries our youth are facing in the future, and those jobs are being eliminated to pay for your tax cut, to pay for what you're doing in Bill 164 and all the other legislation that benefits your friends.

Oh, but then we hear you say, "We're going to privatize a lot of these services and that's more efficient and that's good for the taxpayer." Again, let's take a look at this: If you assume, and I do, that the taxpayer is by and large the majority of working middle-class families, then it's the taxpayer that's getting the two-cups-of-coffee-a-month benefit; not the new Mercedes, not the enlarged investment portfolio, not the expanded summer home. They're the ones who are going to pay the price. How else are they going to pay for it? They're going to pay for it very directly, because your privatized jobs, sure, are more efficient in terms of costing less for the taxpayer, except it does dawn on the taxpayer, when it's their public service

job that has been eliminated, that when it's privatized the efficiency means they go from making \$13 or \$14 or \$15 an hour down to your minimum wage. That is their reality. They pay that price. Who gets to save at the other end? All those folks for whom "marginal tax rates" and other phrases mean an awful lot.

2050

This debate for us as New Democrats is not only, as some opposition members will say, about going too far and too fast. It is both those things, but it's too far, it's too fast and it's in the wrong direction. That's the key thing.

The jobs you're creating are not those decent-paying jobs, with decent benefits, full-time hours and some relative security that did exist prior to you taking the reins of power. So we do find it infuriating when you continue to stand up and say the tax cut is such a wonderful thing, that it's going to generate all these jobs, is going to help the average person decide where they're doing to spend their economic clout and all the other buzz, BS phrases that you come up with.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): That's out of order. I would ask the member to withdraw.

Mr Christopherson: I withdraw, Speaker.

My point is that the brave new world that you talk of is not one that the vast majority of Ontarians are going to share in — except when it comes to the pain.

Who else is talking about the pain you're creating? None other than Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor, Hilary Weston. This is somebody who understands money and power. With great respect, and I mean that sincerely, that is the world she comes from and she understands it well. What she said yesterday in reviewing her first year in office as our Lieutenant Governor is, "There are many of our fellow citizens who are hurting and are in dire need of help."

Do you think she's talking about those people who are gaining tens of thousands of dollars in tax benefits as a result of your 30% tax cut? Do you think that's who is hurting and in dire need of help? I think not. I think what Her Honour has seen in the year she has been in office is that there are literally tens and hundreds of thousands of people, many of whom are children, who have been hurt and continue to be hurt and will be hurt in the future as a result of your policies, the exact policies contained in Bill 164 and every other piece of financial legislation you introduced in this place that's meant to implement your tax cut. Not only is your tax cut stupid — as someone else referred to it — and absurd; it's insane and it's hurtful. But you don't want to see that, or at least you don't want to talk about it.

It's interesting. There are a couple of members, and it does seem to grow, who are beginning to realize — and I can recall making these comments in speeches right from the beginning. Not that I'm suggesting that I'm any kind of political scientist, but experience teaches you an awful lot. I can remember that back in the heyday, when you were riding on those huge poll numbers and everywhere you went in your ridings you were all heroes, there were those of us over here who said: "If you follow the agenda

you set out, the day will come when you will realize that you've got to go door to door and talk to ordinary people and working, middle-class people about the impact of your agenda on their quality of life to get re-elected. When that day happens, there's going to be a real sea change in attitude." Well, it took a little while, longer than I expected, to tell you the truth, and longer than I'd hoped, but it is happening.

Just the other day, for the first time we had two members of your own government vote against one of your measures. Don't kid yourselves. I certainly wouldn't impute motive in terms of why they did it. I'm sure in large part it was principled, but I also believe that one of those principles was that they want to get re-elected. They realized that if they follow the rest of you off the cliff, that's not going to happen. They're beginning to realize that they're going to have to have an attitude change in terms of how their own constituents see them if they're going to get re-elected. Believe me, more and more of you will begin to feel that as time goes on.

That's not even to mention, just as an aside, the incredible political drama around watching some of you scramble among yourselves or, worse yet, jockeying with cabinet ministers for a nomination berth in the next election because you've decided it's a great idea to eliminate 27 members from this place. Notwithstanding that particular intrigue, which we watch with some interest from this side of the House, there are still growing numbers, I believe, who lay there at night and, as they turn off the light and close their eyes, begin to think, "Just how am I going to get re-elected anyway, since just about everybody in my constituency is angry?"

You can spend the next couple of years running from one chamber of commerce meeting to another or a little soirée somewhere else on a Saturday night and you can hide out in the various country clubs all across your ridings, or maybe you can take up a lot more extended trips if you're a parliamentary assistant, where you're making speeches to other chambers of commerce in other parts of the province, but the day will come when you have to stay home in your own riding and go knocking on doors of people who realize that the tradeoff of their education system and their health care system and their municipal services for a couple of cups of coffee was not worth it and that the last thing in the world they want is another four or five years of your mean-spirited agenda because they can't afford it.

There are those, like Ontarians for Responsible Government, the people who like to put up those complimentary billboards over on College and Bay, and others, who will spend a ton of money doing everything they can to make sure you get re-elected, because they have a vested interest. When they look at their tax returns over the last few years under you and they look at their quality of life and they look at how much extra money they've had to spend, and they can utilize your theory of empowerment and spend it where they want, they say: "Hey, that was a great first course. Give me more, give me more."

But what about the people who have lost their communities, the people who have lost their jobs or whose partner or spouse has lost a job and whose quality of life has gone through the floor? And if they're a young person or a middle-aged person and have lost their job, who knows whether they are going to have any prospect in the future, except maybe one of your wonderful new privatized jobs?

I look around at some of the staff here and I see a lot of young people who are wondering what the future is under you folks and I see an awful lot of people who have served decades in this place. I talk to them all the time. They are terrified of your agenda because it means that their quality of life goes down. It means that the quality of life of their families goes down. It means that the quality of life of their communities goes down.

You can hope that your smoke and mirrors and your spin doctors and your bumper sticker slogans will be enough to carry you through the next election. But the reality is that at the end of the day, no matter how much you stand up and say that the average working, middle-class family has a vested interest in making sure that those who are already fortunate enough to have power and privilege get more, it's going to diminish in terms of its effectiveness.

People will have had enough time to — and this is where you've got problems. I wish we had some more time to talk about some of these things, but I have less than a minute now so I'll wrap up. What will happen at the end of the day is that you're going to realize that the people like those I just spoke of in these immediate surroundings as I look around the room at the people here, when you compare their numbers in terms of the general population to the very small selective group of people in this province who benefit from your agenda, who have an increased quality of life as a result of your cutting and slashing and giving away of tax benefits — you will realize that no matter how you cut things, at the end of the day there's still a hell of a lot more of those people and of us than there are of the very few people you pander to at the expense of working people and their families.

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The Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Spina: I take great exception to the perception of Conservatives in this province being fat cats who pander to the small portion of this society who are seemingly the wealthy, according to the member for Hamilton Centre. I say that with all sincerity, because I'm the son of a railroad worker and an immigrant —

Mr Wildman: Who wasn't a Tory.

Mr Spina: Who voted for the Tories — in Sault Ste Marie, I might add.

My meetings were not with chambers of commerce. Tony Clement and I, from Brampton, have had many town hall meetings. We have never backed down from the school meetings that we were invited to. We have been door-knocking — with the exception of during the municipal election — regularly. That's how we keep in touch with our constituents. The Brampton constituency is not a fat-cat wealthy community; it is a community of hard-

working, middle-class, blue- and white-collar workers. They are the ones who voted both Mr Clement and myself, with a majority, into this government in this last election.

You talk about a tax cut: 40% of that will fully be for the low-income families under \$40,000. As the salary increases, it diminishes to as low as 12%. You want to talk about jobs created? In Brampton, 3,800 good-quality professional jobs have been created at Nortel. You talk about our bumper sticker slogans. Well, mister, your bumper sticker slogans and Jobs Ontario didn't get you re-elected, but the CSR, the Common Sense Revolution, got me elected.

Mr Bartolucci: I'd like to thank the member for Hamilton Centre for his very impassioned approach and for his very insightful comments. Let me tell you, they are comments that you people should be listening to. That's the problem we have around this place: We pick up one little point and blow it all out of proportion instead of listening to the message the member is trying to get across to the government. Maybe that's part of the problem with the way we operate in this place. We really don't think that anybody has anything to offer anyone else unless they're in the same party.

That's the sad commentary in the Ontario Legislature. I'm telling you right now, it has never been more pronounced than it is with this government. That's sad, because the member makes some very excellent suggestions to the government. But no, we're going to home in on one or two sentences and blow them all out of proportion in the hopes that the average Ontarian will forget what the member said. After Bill 152, after Bill 160, people are listening very carefully to what each and every one of us is saying. Another thing they want from this House is for us to start listening to each other. They want us to start taking some of the advice that the opposition is getting from its constituents and the people of Ontario, and pass it on to a government that won't listen in the hopes that they will listen. That's your challenge.

Mr Wildman: I'd like to congratulate my friend from Hamilton Centre for his comments. I'm sorry that the member for Brampton North seemed to be offended by the characterization of this government and this government's intentions by my friend from Hamilton Centre.

We should all recognize, as a former Tory Premier once said to me in this place, that perception is politics, rather than the other way around, that politics is perception. Perception is indeed politics. The politics is the fact that this government would like the perception to be that they are trying to serve the needs of the vast majority of Ontarians and that they are trying to produce an economy that will serve their interests and their needs.

The problem with that is that we know that 66% of the tax cut is going to go to the top 10% of income-earners in the province, 66% of the money, people who don't need it and, unfortunately, no guarantee that they are going to spend it in Ontario. Many of them, because they don't need it, are not going to spend it. Others will spend it on holidays in Hawaii or St Moritz or wherever, or, if they do spend it here, may buy a Mercedes or a BMW, which will

help the workers in the dealership but doesn't produce any other jobs because those are manufactured in foreign countries.

The fact is that the trickle-down theory of economics does not work and it will not serve the majority in this province.

Mr Baird: I would like to congratulate my colleague the member for Hamilton Centre on his remarks. I disagree with the member on just about everything, but I can certainly respect his opinion. You get one opinion that doesn't go back and forth, and you've got to respect that.

He spoke about how Conservative MPPs must sit at home wondering how we will get re-elected. I can tell you, we on this side of the House don't undertake politics and government as a popularity contest. We know we can't be all things to all people. We want to do what's best for the people of Ontario, what's best for the province of Ontario, and sometimes you've got to make decisions that are good for the people in your province in the long term but are perhaps more controversial in the short term.

As the poet Robert Frost said, we took the path less travelled, and what a difference it has made.

The member from Hamilton spoke of being terrified of the agenda. Was it the agenda that helped create more than 250,000 new jobs in the province? Does that terrify him? At the homes of 250,000 families, the phone rang and the voice on the other end of the line said, "You got the job," and they're able to provide for their families, are able to raise their children with some dignity. Does that terrify him? Or the quarter of a million people who have been able to leave the welfare system as a result of very successful welfare reforms? Or the beginning of movement and progress on youth unemployment and the measures contained in Bill 164 for high technology and graduates and co-op education to help even more, to ensure we don't take it for granted?

Consumer confidence is up. Spending is up. There are some people in Ontario who don't pick up a picket sign and protest in front of Queen's Park, who don't have temper tantrums in front of the cameras, and we're working to ensure that there are jobs and opportunity for them.

2110

The Speaker: Member for Hamilton Centre.

Mr Christopherson: Thank you to all members who took the time to respond. I always appreciate listening to the member for Sudbury and his message of listening to the message.

My colleague from Algoma, I always appreciate his very generous remarks. He always complements and adds to anything that I might have said, and I appreciate that, as always.

To my friend from Nepean, when he said that their politics is not that of a popularity contest — obviously. That's pretty clear. But I would mention to him that the other person who comes to mind who used to say that an awful lot was Brian Mulroney. He would always use that to justify as he was beginning the process of dismantling a lot of the things that made this a great nation. So that brought him to mind.

I'll give you an example of what terrifies me about your agenda, and I'd be willing to debate any one of you any day about the different terrifying images that we have in this province. There are workers at S.A. Armstrong, for example, who've been on strike now for over 17 months because your government made scabs legal again in Ontario. That's devastating. That's frightening. The fact of the matter is that strike wouldn't be happening if it weren't for your making scabs legal again in Ontario.

To my friend from Brampton North, it's interesting that the example he used is a corporation that happens to have one of the strongest unions in North America. Isn't that interesting, from a government that clearly hates unions and believes they are yesterday's idea and have no value today.

I also, in ending, would mention I find it interesting that he used the term "fat cat." I use that directly, but it was Tommy Douglas who said, "For those of us who are from the working world, it's not what kind of cat, it's the fact that they're catching your mice."

The Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Ted Arnott (Wellington): And it was Tommy Douglas who also believed that incurring massive amounts of debt would ultimately only enrich the bankers. He spoke against that consistently, which is something that obviously the New Democratic Party, while it was in government, forgot about.

I am very pleased to rise this evening to speak in support of Bill 164, on which we are in second reading debate this evening. The measures in this bill are a significant part of the government's plan to make Ontario's economy stronger by creating a climate where investment and initiative are rewarded.

Improving access to capital will help small businesses in communities throughout Ontario, and Wellington county, grow and create the new jobs that we need. Bill 164 reflects how we've listened to stakeholders on making the community small business investment funds more attractive.

The 1997 budget announced the creation of community small business investment funds to encourage communities to partner with financial institutions, labour-sponsored investment funds and local investors to provide greater access to capital for small, local, growth-oriented businesses. Bill 164 will provide further support for small business by enhancing and simplifying the small business investment tax credit for banks, trust companies, credit unions and caisses populaires that allows these financial institutions to reduce their capital tax when they invest or lend to small businesses.

In order to simplify and modernize Ontario's capital tax system, the bill will harmonize Ontario's capital tax on banks and other financial institutions with the federal government's large corporations tax. This will level the playing field between financial institutions and will also reduce compliance costs for business and administration costs for government.

Bill 164 recognizes the important contribution of the domestic film and television industry to our economy. It

implements the 1997 budget announcement to increase Ontario's domestic film and television tax credit rate. The Minister of Finance has also announced that legislation will be introduced to expand eligible genres to remove the per-project and corporate caps on size of production and total credits.

These changes will significantly expand the amount of eligible Canadian content production that will qualify for Ontario's tax credit. These measures will help to ensure that Ontario continues to be a leading film and television production centre in North America.

Bill 164 will provide more support for other cultural industries in Ontario. The book publishing tax credit will encourage Ontario's publishers to publish and promote new Canadian authors. The bill responds to advice from the publishing industry to include educational textbooks and first-time illustrators of children's books.

There is new confidence in the private sector, which is supported by the actions of the provincial government. We want to help Ontarians take advantage of the opportunities opening up around the province.

Bill 164 supports lower-income working families who are not benefiting currently from child care funding by implementing our budget's commitment to a child care tax credit. About 90,000 families and 125,000 children under age 7 are expected to benefit from the 1997 tax credit. This tax credit will be a new investment of about \$40 million to support lower-income working families and their children. This government is committed to ensuring that Ontarians receive high-quality service in a cost-effective way in all aspects of the government's operations.

This legislation delivers on our commitment to reduce costs and make sense of the division of provincial and municipal responsibilities by returning property assessment to the municipalities, where it can be run more efficiently and effectively. Bill 164 will establish the Ontario Property Assessment Corp. After a quarter century of the province preparing this local tax base, the municipal sector will take back its control and management, now that the province-wide assessment has been undertaken.

We know that the private sector is the primary economic engine in Ontario. It is our government's responsibility to pave the way for entrepreneurs to invest and create new jobs here. This is why we are encouraging by reducing taxes, eliminating barriers to growth and providing the private sector with the tools it needs to invest, compete and create the new jobs we need for the people of this province. I encourage all members of this House to support this important piece of legislation.

The Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Bartolucci: I'd just like to make a very few comments with regard to what the member said.

He alluded to the tax cut. I'm not sure he understands that by and large a tax cut for the average man is certainly not something that's appreciated, because of the price you have to pay for that tax cut in new taxes. We call them user fees, but I believe it was Mike Harris who said a user fee is just another form of taxation. He's going to go down

in history as the person who increased taxes more times in a single term than anyone else.

I have to tell you as well that if we're looking at setting the right environment in Ontario, I'm afraid the agenda the government has gone on is in the wrong direction. Jobs are not being created for our youth. We have a youth employment crisis. I don't know how the government is addressing the problem we have with youth employment. I have two children in university, one doing a master's program and one graduating, hopefully this year, from Laurentian. You know what? They both are concerned because they want to stay in Ontario, but they don't see any stability for them to stay here in meaningful, long-term employment.

If you really want to be a government that is interested in promoting job creation, you might want to try to devise a strategy which will give hope to the youth of Ontario to remain in Ontario, to make Ontario strong. Bill 164 does none of that.

2120

Mr Lessard: I want to thank the member for Wellington for his comments and acknowledge the ruling you made when he first began, saying that he was a courteous member. He certainly is; I agree with that. He is a loyal soldier in Mike Harris's army and has been a strong supporter of the Common Sense Revolution all along. That was reflected in his commonsense comments here tonight, I guess.

Some of the things he didn't really refer to in his comments were who is going to benefit and who is going to pay for the job creation initiatives, so-called, that are included in Bill 164.

What kind of jobs are going to be created through these initiatives? We've seen an elimination of thousands of public sector jobs, the impending elimination of thousands of teachers' jobs, the elimination of nursing jobs. There's been an elimination of thousands of jobs, and they're going to be replaced by jobs that may be created through the initiatives in Bill 164. We're going to see many traditionally public sector jobs become privatized and the people who are going to lose those jobs are the ones who will pay the price for the privatized jobs.

We heard today that there are plans to review the Employment Standards Act, and we know that includes provisions for minimum wage. Does that mean that these private sector jobs at minimum wage could be even lower than the minimum wage we have now? I hope that's not going to be the case. We also heard what Sears is doing in Sault Ste Marie, eliminating long-standing full-time jobs and replacing them with part-time jobs.

Those are the people who are paying the price, and that's the future that people like my son Brett who are concerned about it —

The Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Allan K. McLean (Simcoe East): I want to compliment the member for Wellington on his remarks with regard to Bill 164, which is the bill that supplies support for small business corporations and enhances in simplifying the small business tax. The member has brought out

many of the issues that we want to relate to the business community of this province. When we look at the film-makers, the people who are involved in television, the tax credit rates they get, these are all things that are going to enhance the economy of Ontario.

Bill 164 supports lower-income working families who are not benefiting from the current child care funding by implementing our budget commitment for a child care tax credit where about 90,000 families and 125,000 children under the age of seven are expected to benefit from the 1997 tax credit.

The member wisely points out that these are important things with regard to the budgetary policies of this government. It implements the 1997 budget announcement to increase Ontario's domestic film and television tax credit, which I have indicated. These measures will help ensure that Ontario continues to be a leading film and television producer in North America. My understanding is it's in third place in the world, behind Los Angeles and New York. Toronto is third in that line.

Bill 164 will provide more support for other cultural industries as well. The book publishing tax credit will encourage Ontario publishers to publish and promote new Canadian authors, which is part of the overall business community.

After a quarter of a century of the province preparing this local tax base, the municipal sector will take back its control and management now that the province-wide assessment has been undertaken.

I compliment the member for Wellington on his remarks this evening.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): Certainly some of the measures that are called for in this bill are totally acceptable, particularly with respect to the film and cinema credits. However, the whole notion of a tax cut when we're still running an annual deficit in this province of somewhere between \$6 billion and \$7 billion, when we're still increasing the debt of this province from \$100 billion where we started in 1995 to over \$120 billion by the year 2000, is simply totally unacceptable.

Even the government's own budget documents clearly show that this year we anticipate paying \$9.1 billion in interest payments on the public debt. When you compare that to two years ago, when it was \$2 billion less, on a total budget of about \$50 billion, you can well understand how the people of Ontario must find it totally incongruous, must find it totally unacceptable, that we are actually giving people tax cuts at the same time that we're still increasing the public debt, when we're increasing the interest payments on the debt, even during the period of time when interest rates are at an all-time low. It is totally unacceptable.

The other point of course is, this only helps some Ontarians. It doesn't help the Ontarians who are at the bottom one third of the economic scale. Those people have had it a lot worse during the last two years. They can

expect absolutely nothing from this government. They have gotten absolutely nothing from this government, except more grief, more controversy.

I would just say to this government once again, forget about your tax cut for January 1.

Interjection.

The Speaker: How many were there? There were four. Response, member for Wellington.

Mr Arnott: Sorry, to the member for Algoma. I wish he'd had a chance to add his comments, but it is almost 9:30 and we're almost concluding our evening's debate.

I want to thank the member for Sudbury for his constructive comments, and the member for Windsor-Riverside for complimenting me on being a loyal foot soldier for the Common Sense Revolution. I appreciate that compliment. The member for Simcoe East, my colleague and friend who over the years has provided me with a great deal of very helpful political advice and help in terms of representing my riding and the good job that he does representing his riding is something we all appreciate; also the member for Kingston and The Islands for his comments.

I'd like to say a couple of things. I've listened to the debate and I hear the opposition parties continuing to make reference to the government's policy of reducing taxes so as to encourage more job creation. They are critical of that. They're overlooking, I think, the fact that this bill does not reduce taxes; it creates tax credits, tax credits to stimulate further investment and create incentives to encourage positive things to happen in Ontario. We have the graduate transitions tax credit in this bill; the cooperative education tax credit; the community small business investment fund program, another tax credit; the small business investment tax credit; the Ontario business research-institute tax credit for research and development; the Ontario new technology tax incentive; the Ontario computer, animation and special effects tax credit; the Ontario film and television tax credit; the Ontario book publishing tax credit; the child care tax credit and a number of other initiatives which encourage further investment in things I think all of us in this House would probably support. That's something that they have to be reminded of, I believe.

In response to one of the points that was made by the member for Sudbury suggesting that the government doesn't realize that there's a severe youth unemployment problem, we know that the government recognizes this problem and has undertaken measures to encourage job creation obviously, especially for young people. In our ministry, the ministry that I'm involved with, the Ministry of Economic Development, we're doing everything we can —

The Speaker: It now being nearly 9:30 of the clock, this House stands adjourned till 1:30 of the clock tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 2128.

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No. 259A

N° 259A

ISSN 1180-2987

Legislative Assembly of Ontario

First Session, 36th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Première session, 36^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Wednesday 10 December 1997

Mercredi 10 décembre 1997

Speaker
Honourable Chris Stockwell

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Président
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 10 December 1997

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 10 décembre 1997

The House met at 1330.

Prayers.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

PRINCIPALS AND VICE-PRINCIPALS

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): We all know Bill 160 is wrong. Everyone except the government acknowledges that. But what borders on insanity with regard to Bill 160 is the amendment to remove principals and vice-principals from their federations. The government doesn't understand and hasn't comprehended the complexity of the problem the government itself is creating for the principals, the vice-principals and the board.

What happens to a person who assumes the role of principal or vice-principal as of January 1 of this coming year? The government didn't figure, didn't think, didn't analyse, hasn't come up with a solution for that.

What are the different classes of principals and vice-principals the legislation refers to? At a technical briefing, the ministry was asked that question: no answer. The government couldn't answer their own stipulation in their amendment.

What happens to the retirement gratuity a teacher already has with the board when they opt out and decide to become a full-time administrator with no rights? What happens to the years of accumulation? Again, the government has no answers. With this amendment, the government has no answers at all.

PRIVATIZATION OF CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): This government persists in its reckless and dangerous plan to privatize correctional services here in the province of Ontario. I say it's time, and people across this province know it's time, for the public to let Mike Harris and Bob Runciman know exactly where the people of Ontario stand. What people across this province are telling this government is not to jeopardize public safety for private profits, because that's what privatization of correctional services is all about.

Private jails simply don't work. Private jails pose a danger to the community, a danger to the staff working in them and, quite frankly, a danger to the inmates serving their time in them. And the fact is that private jails are

simply no cheaper to operate. The US government, in its report of August 1996, established clearly that private jails didn't save taxpayers money. What they did find out is that they expose communities to greater and greater risk.

We've got correctional officers, representative of the 3,000-plus professional, committed, hardworking, dedicated correctional officers across this province, sitting right here in the members' gallery this afternoon. These correctional officers are here to tell you, Speaker, and to tell this government that its plan to privatize jails is going to constitute a serious jeopardization of public safety.

I've got with me but a few of the thousands and thousands of petitions being signed by people across this province saying no to privatization —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you.

SISTER THERESE BONNEVILLE

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough-Ellesmere): It gives me great pleasure today to rise in the House to pay tribute to a person who has contributed so much to advance the education and wellbeing of young, single women and their children through Rosalie Hall and the Rosalie Hall Foundation.

Sadly, Sister Therese Bonneville passed away on November 5 of this year. Sister Therese was born in Wolseley, Saskatchewan, the youngest of 14 children. She was educated in Haileybury, Ontario, where she began caring for others at the hospital run by the Misericordia Sisters. Sister Therese became a member of the Misericordia Sisters in January 1952, and in 1958 became the purchasing agent for the Scarborough General Hospital, which was owned and operated by the sisters until 1972.

During the last 18 years, Sister Therese demonstrated her talents as a leader and visionary in her capacity as executive director of Rosalie Hall and the foundation, leading board members, staff and volunteers through two expansions of the facility and many difficult years of funding a service for society's often forgotten young mothers and their babies.

Although she is no longer with us, Sister Therese's guidance, wisdom and commitment have had a positive and lasting impact for women in crisis who came through the doors of Rosalie Hall and were able to break free of the cycle of dependency, violence and abuse.

Rosalie Hall, located in Scarborough since 1956, has certainly benefited over the many years of tireless efforts by Sister Therese.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur): There is no question that the number one issue of concern in my community of Thunder Bay is health care, specifically the deteriorating level of care that's being experienced by many who need access to the system.

While the medical staff continue to struggle to provide necessary services under extremely difficult circumstances, indecision by the health minister, or a complete lack of action, is putting pressure on the system that is simply unacceptable.

In the area of mental health, the ministry says it is completely changing the way services are to be delivered, and as part of that the Lakehead Psychiatric Hospital has been ordered to close its doors on March 31, 1999. Yet the Northwestern Ontario Mental Health Agency, which was to be set up by March 1997 to plan and coordinate services all across the region, is still not in place.

Minister, why is the agency not up and running and just when will it happen?

Perhaps more important, how can you still plan on closing the LPH a mere 15 months from now when the comprehensive supports that are needed in the community are not being put in place?

The situation is grim. The fact is that we are having great difficulty in recruiting and retaining psychiatrists in Thunder Bay because there is no long-term plan in place. Indeed we've seen incidents where patients in need of help have been sent to Kenora because of the situation in Thunder Bay.

The provision of mental health services in our community is but one of many areas of health care concern. But the needs in the mental health area are great and cannot be ignored or treated as a lower priority. We need action from you, Minister, and we need it now.

SURESH MANICKAVASAGAM

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): Today on International Human Rights Day, I want to take this opportunity to tell members of the Legislature that I've recently given my support to Amnesty International's campaign for the immediate and unconditional release of Suresh Manickavasagam.

Suresh is a Tamil political prisoner who's been in the Don Jail here in Toronto for over two years. He's now facing imminent deportation to Sri Lanka, where he will face certain persecution and possible death.

Suresh was accepted as a convention refugee in April 1991 in Canada by the same authorities that are now attempting to deport him. There is absolutely no evidence that has been put forward, and the federal court has already conceded on the point that there are no allegations of criminal misconduct or criminal activity against Suresh, yet he's being deported.

I do not have the time to explain the complexities of the war going on in Sri Lanka, but I can assure you that there are atrocities being committed over there. Hundreds of

thousands of people are having to flee their homes. Thousands are being captured, imprisoned, tortured and murdered. Young women are routinely raped, tortured and murdered.

This is an opportunity for everybody in the House to take part in this campaign —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you. Statements.

BACKHOUSE MILL

Mr Toby Barrett (Norfolk): The year 1998 marks the 200th anniversary of the Backhouse Mill, the centrepiece of the Backus Heritage Conservation Area near Port Rowan in my riding.

The Backhouse Mill is the oldest grist mill in the country, and perhaps in North America, that is on its original site and still in running order. The mill was in continuous operation by the same family, the Backhouses, from 1798 until 1956. I can recall going to the mill with my father to have grain ground.

The Backhouse Mill is the lone survivor of all the other mills in the area, which were burned by American troops during the War of 1812. I was always told that a large straw stack was set afire near the mill, thus causing the enemy to think the mill was already alight.

The Backus property comprises 600 acres of Carolinian forest with hiking trails, a heritage village which includes several barns, two log houses, a carriage shop, a blacksmith's shop, an octagonal schoolhouse and a museum. There is also a new outdoor education centre.

This unique piece of Ontario's history will be celebrated next year on July 12 and will also include a large family reunion. I would offer an invitation to the members to attend. There won't be another chance like this for another 100 years.

1340

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): Bill 152, the municipal downloading bill, received royal assent earlier this week, at 3:03 pm on Monday, December 8. However, with its passage, huge questions still remain. We are less than three weeks from the new year and municipalities and their taxpayers still do not have accurate numbers from the government about the services they will be required to fund.

Municipal officials from across the province have been telling you this for months: that your scheme is not revenue-neutral. AMO has been telling you this, we have been telling you this, even your own backbenchers have been saying this. In fact, in a brave and unprecedented move, two Tories voted against the downloading bill because they haven't seen the numbers to back up your claim of revenue neutrality.

Now we have reports that the government might be backtracking, might be admitting, months after the fact,

that its scheme isn't revenue-neutral, and is looking at providing municipalities with additional funding.

I call upon the government today to do three things: (1) confirm that you will be providing additional moneys to municipalities and tell us how much and on what basis; (2) release, finally, the downloading numbers, the real numbers, to municipalities that they have been requesting from you for months; (3) issue in writing a guarantee to each and every municipality that if any of them are financially worse off because of the changes made to education funding and the effects of Bill 152, the government will cover their shortfall.

You must guarantee that we won't see municipalities forced to raise property taxes as a result of your power grab of education and the ridiculous downloading of health and social services.

Treasurer, we call upon you to respond immediately to this request.

SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

Mr Allan K. McLean (Simcoe East): Based on information from a former vice-principal in my riding, I urge the Minister of Education to look for accountability from schools.

In Simcoe East school principals receive \$213 per secondary student and \$111 per elementary student. Originally, this allotment was for textbooks, library books and art supplies. Now this money is used by principals for various things. In fact, in 1996 Simcoe county schools received \$7.5 million. Only 12.8% went to textbooks, library books and learning materials. That's less than \$1 million going directly into Simcoe county classrooms.

Where did the rest of the money go? School principals spent the remainder on administration, magazines and professional books for staff, furniture and fixtures, and on vague accounts described as "supplies" and "miscellaneous."

It is my understanding principals are not formally audited for their spending practices.

Parent groups raise thousands for bands, choirs and playgrounds. Oro-Medonte parents paid for painting the gym and replacing curtains. The school board never sees an accounting for this money. In fact, auditors were recently dumfounded at how one school was mismanaging funds.

Recently a school council representative complained their school did not have enough money for textbooks. Examinations show the school spent only 10% of its discretionary funds on text and library books.

This government has shown great courage in reversing a deteriorating school system.

MEMBER'S CONDUCT

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to section 30 of the Members' Integrity Act, 1994, I have today laid upon the table a request by the member for Hamilton Centre to the

Honourable Robert C. Rutherford, Integrity Commissioner, for an opinion on whether the member for Simcoe Centre has contravened the act or Ontario parliamentary convention.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): I also beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received the 47th report of the standing committee on government agencies.

Pursuant to standing order 105(g)9, the report is deemed to be adopted by this House.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON REGULATIONS AND PRIVATE BILLS

Mr Toby Barrett (Norfolk): I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on regulations and private bills and move its adoption.

Clerk at the Table (Mr Todd Decker): Your committee begs to report the following bill as amended:

Bill Pr89, An Act respecting the City of Brampton.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on estimates.

Clerk at the Table (Mr Todd Decker): Your committee presents the following report:

Pursuant to standing order 60(a), the estimates 1997-98 of the following offices are reported back to the House as they were not previously selected by the committee for consideration and are deemed to be received and concurred in:

Vote 201, Office of the Assembly —

Interjection: Dispense.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Dispense? Dispense.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

TAMIL EELAM SOCIETY OF CANADA ACT, 1997

Mr Jim Brown moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr96, An Act respecting The Tamil Eelam Society of Canada.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Hon Isabel Bassett (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'd like to request unanimous consent to make statements on the occasion of the 49th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Agreed? Agreed.

Hon Ms Bassett: I am pleased to draw attention to an event of major significance. Today the province of Ontario joins with nations around the world launching the 50th anniversary year of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. On this day in 1948 the General Assembly of the United Nations voted unanimously to approve the universal declaration. The purpose of this landmark document is to recognize the dignity and inherent rights of all people. Today is the 49th anniversary of the declaration, and we are also kicking off a year of celebration leading up to the 50th anniversary. The coming year will be for reflection, education and rededication.

Human rights spring from a desire in everyone for fairness and respect. As individuals from different backgrounds, we expect to coexist peacefully. We expect not to be treated unjustly by governments, and we expect to be free of discrimination based on race, religion, gender, all of those grounds prohibited in the UN declaration.

Canada has played an important role in the human rights movement worldwide. The late John Humphrey of New Brunswick played a significant role in drafting the universal declaration. He and the UN team worked for three long years to give shape to these ideals, and as Canadians, we must continue to honour his legacy.

Ontario has played a defining role in the history of human rights in this country. The Ontario Human Rights Commission was established in 1962. This made Ontario the first jurisdiction in Canada to establish a Human Rights Code and a commission of its own. Ontario has for 35 years benefited from the expertise and guidance of the commission and its staff. The 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights gives us an opportunity to rededicate ourselves to protecting the inalienable rights of all people. We renew that commitment today.

1350

We are joined in the gallery by members of the United Nations Greater Toronto Initiative, a group committed to promoting the cause of universal human rights throughout the 50th anniversary year. A short time from now they will be joining us at a signing ceremony at which the Ontario Legislature will formally rededicate our commitment to universal human rights. Throughout the year, we will work to raise awareness of this important event. I ask members of this House to go out into their communities and encourage the people of this province to learn, to educate, to commemorate and, most importantly, to join in the celebrations.

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): I am pleased on behalf of the Liberal Party to also comment on the celebration of the 49th anniversary of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, especially as we approach the 50th anniversary year.

Some of the rights included in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and these are just some, are the right to life, liberty and security of the person; the right to education; the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; freedom of opinion and expression; the right to work; and the right to seek and obtain asylum from persecution in other countries, among others.

One of the drafters of this declaration, and its chair in the first year, was Mrs Eleanor Roosevelt. Today I would like to quote from her on her view of where human rights begin. She says:

"...in small places, close to home — so close and so small that they cannot be seen on any maps of the world. Yet they are the world of the individual person; the neighbourhood he lives in; the school or college he attends; the factory, farm or office where he works. Such are the places where every man, woman and child seeks equal justice, equal opportunity, equal dignity without discrimination. Unless these rights have meaning there, they have little meaning anywhere," if they are not where people live. "Without concerned citizen action to uphold them close to home, we shall look in vain for progress in the larger world."

Even though close to 50 years have elapsed since these words were first spoken in answer to the question, "Where, after all, do human rights begin?" the essence of that statement is equally applicable today, except of course for the gender bias.

The slogan for the 50th celebration is "All Human Rights For All." Indeed, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was the founding declaration of the newly formed UN commission and its first major achievement.

It has been followed by several important conventions adopted by the international community, including the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination, in 1965; the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, in 1966; the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, in 1996; the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women, in 1979; the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, in 1987; and of course the most recent one, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, in 1989. Canada is a signatory to these and many other international treaties.

Despite the progress made in many areas of human rights, we must not forget the many violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms that continue to take place in many parts of the world. Many Canadians and Ontarians, young and old, are concerned about human rights abuses not only in Canada but in other countries as well. This was recently brought to light at the APEC summit in Vancouver and the subsequent visit of Chinese

president Jiang Zemin to Edmonton and Toronto, where he met with Premier Harris.

How does the Universal Declaration of Human Rights relate to Ontarians? Our individual rights are enshrined in the Ontario Human Rights Code, which is enforced by the Ontario Human Rights Commission.

As labour, human rights and employment equity critic for my party, I'm particularly concerned about workplace equal opportunities. I noted with interest when the former Minister of Citizenship replaced the employment equity legislation with a Web site on the Internet as this government's initiative to work with employers, employees and community groups to advance equal opportunity for all Ontarians. I visited that Web site recently, and it seems to me that it is the only component of what was to have been an equal opportunity plan.

Statistics Canada data on the typical Internet user indicate that fewer than 50% of all Canadians have computers. Of those 50%, only 8% have modems to access the Net, and the average income of someone with a Net connection is \$69,000. If the government has forfeited its role in equal opportunity to that of a facilitator, how is this going to build a competitive society and create jobs for those who do not now participate fully in the labour force because of barriers to discrimination?

Finally, in discussion of rights I cannot let pass the occasion to warn all members of the Ontario Legislature that the right of all members to fully participate has been seriously undermined and therefore democracy in Ontario is undermined and diminished as well.

During the 50th year, I urge all of you to examine how we as Ontario legislators are ensuring that we are living up to the 50th year commitment of a truly human quality of life for all Ontarians.

As the opening words of the declaration preamble state, "Recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world."

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): I'm pleased to rise on behalf of the New Democratic Party today to add our words on this very important occasion of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights Day. I certainly want to also note, as the minister has done, that 49 years ago on December 10, 1948, the United Nations adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to formally recognize the inherent dignity and equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family as the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world.

I too want to welcome and recognize the people in the gallery today from the Greater Toronto Initiative, a coalition of volunteers from a variety of community organizations who are organizing activities to mark what is starting off today as the 50th anniversary year of the declaration. I know that, as we speak, one of those first events is taking place down at Metro Hall today, a panel discussion on the impact of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights on local advocacy work.

On this occasion, I also want to note that as we, representatives from the three parties, go forward to

recommit ourselves by signing the declaration that we will be signing in the ceremony that will follow later this afternoon, it is important, as the now Premier and then leader of the third party himself said only a few short years ago, that we understand that we too have responsibilities in this area as members of this Legislature, and certainly anyone who is a member of a government current, past or future, to ensure that we go beyond the rhetoric, to ensure we understand that, as he said a couple of years ago:

"Support, then, for equality of opportunity is hollow rhetoric unless you support efforts to enhance those opportunities. That means equal access to education, equal access to jobs, equal access to promotion opportunities and equal treatment under the law. It means no glass ceilings for women, no denial of access because of religious headgear, no quotas. Opportunity, like justice, should be blind," to use his words.

He further said:

"I believe the best way to advance human rights and dignity both at home and abroad is to provide an example that is consistent, credible, believable, and to provide greater opportunities. That opportunity doesn't come from words or politically correct phrases or interjections. It comes from education, protection under the law and economic development.

"One of the best ways we can enhance opportunity in Ontario is to provide a strong economy, a fair justice system, an accessible health care system, excellence in education, equal and accessible to all."

I quote those comments from the Premier and leader of the third party, as he was back on December 8, 1994, when he stood in this House and marked exactly this day that we are marking today, because I think it behooves us, as parliamentarians, on this day to not just see this as the great day of celebration it needs to be and we want it to be and we recognize it as being, that is, in accepting that great progress has been made since that day 49 years ago across the world when that declaration was signed and was introduced through the United Nations.

While it seems to be easier as we look at the successes that have come about to look at what jurisdictions outside of Canada have done, to look at conflicts that have been resolved across the world, to look at improvements that have been made, it is, too, part of our responsibility as members of this Legislature to also look at our own situation and see what has been done and what hasn't been done.

On this day we have to also reflect upon what has been happening in the last few years, because what we have seen is a situation in which the current government has continued to in fact attack some of those basic rights, some of those protections that the Premier himself was lauding a few short years ago.

1400

We have seen this revealed and come about through such examples as when only earlier this year Ontario made the Amnesty International list of outstanding human rights violations with the Harris government's refusal to

call an inquiry into the death of Dudley George at Ipperwash.

We have seen this government very slow to act on issues dealing with individuals circulating hate literature in Toronto schools.

We have seen this government slash the budgets and the ability of groups like the Human Rights Commissions to enforce the legislation that is in place and therefore the ability for people to exercise those same rights the Premier spoke about a few years ago.

We have seen this government scrap the employment equity legislation, which would have given people an opportunity to find their rightful place in society.

We have seen this government slash the pay equity program.

We have seen this government get rid of the Anti-Racism Secretariat in the Ministry of Citizenship and in other ministries, particularly the Ministry of Education.

We have seen step after step taken by this government to have those basic rights denied.

I know that on occasions like this it continues to be the wish of the government members that we try and do these things in a non-partisan way, but I don't know how to stand up on this day and celebrate the accomplishments the human rights declaration means across the world and ignore the ongoing discrimination that is being caused by the actions of this government and by the actions of the federal government.

My colleague Ms Churley talked earlier about the situation of one Suresh Manickavasagam, in terms of being in prison under a law that was passed by the current Liberal government, without any right of hearing, even though he has been given the status in the past couple of years of a refugee in this country. Now he's very likely about to be deported. Even though there is no criminal misconduct alleged against him, no criminal activity, though there are no allegations that he has engaged in terrorism, yet the government of the day has seen fit to imprison him and keep him in prison pending his deportation.

We continue to see a situation in which, while we believe it seems that the barriers need to be open in terms of trade with other countries of the world, at the same time we continue to put barriers in the way of people to exercise their professions both here in Ontario and in Canada, and through actions of the federal government we continue to make it virtually impossible for people of low income and modest means to come to this country and become part of its fabric.

We have to challenge ourselves to go, particularly on a day like today, as the Premier himself said to us a couple of years ago, beyond the rhetoric and look at what we are doing as governments and as parliamentarians and, I hope, to understand that on days like this particularly, in re-committing ourselves, we are committing ourselves to much more than the rhetoric of believing that human rights is a fundamental part of any society that we can build here in Canada. That commitment means being prepared to put in place laws and put in place enforcement mechanisms

that will truly ensure that we have a society of equality in this province and in this country.

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough North): I want to take this opportunity to make my contribution on this very important day. As we know, the International Human Rights Year starts on December 10, and it is the 49th anniversary. I would also like to make this comment, that the proposition that all human beings are equally entitled to be treated with dignity and fairness has been an ideal in world and local affairs for at least a century now. We may record as many setbacks as we've seen successes, but its appeal remains as fundamental as ever. According to a Supreme Court Justice: "Human rights is justice. When people don't have justice, it creates all kinds of problems."

Few countries have devoted themselves to the ideal of human rights as justice with more consistency than Canada. One might even suggest that the standards of equality and inclusiveness are an important measure of what Canada is about and of what it stands for on the international stage.

However, Canada's record as a committed proponent of human rights is only as convincing as its latest performance.

We have seen over the last couple of years, although we are very proud to be Canadians and very proud to be a country that stands as one of the best places in the world to live, some things that are happening which give us some concern. We are seeing, for instance in this province, where the most vulnerable are subjected to the denial of their human rights through the fact that sometimes we take fiscal responsibility more than human responsibility, the fact that legal aid budgets have been cut, denying those more vulnerable, not having any funds, the ability to defend their rights in the courts.

We are also seeing the Human Rights Commission in dire need of money to carry out its work to defend those principles and defend those most vulnerable in our society. Their budgets have been cut. We have seen backlogs in the Human Rights Commission and we are finding that the Human Rights Commission itself is using sections within the code to be calling things frivolous, therefore those individuals who want to bring forward some of the violations of human rights are denied those rights. The Ombudsman has complained about the cutbacks within their department and the fact that many issues that would be dealt with by the government have been delayed.

Those are denials of human rights. Those who are subjected the most to those denials are the most vulnerable in our society. We see individuals in our society on employment equity as we struggle, all parties here, with the fact of bringing in effective employment equity, the right to work, a part of the principles of human rights that today continue to be a struggle. We still don't have access to employment equity. Pay equity is another matter that has been half done — all these issues, we've got a long way to go. While we stand up very proud of the things we have done in our society, there are a lot more to do.

I applaud the appointment of the minister, Ms Bassett, who many of us realize is a sensitive individual. I want to

say to her that we stand on this side of the House very supportive of the things she will attempt to do for there is much to do in those areas. There are high expectations of you in your role. That is where we draw the partisan line. We should not be partisan about this but make sure that human rights are being looked at.

We looked at the Ipperwash situation, trying to get a hearing on that. The government denies that. We have seen individuals who want to come forward to be heard about how they are being governed. That is also being denied.

As I applaud what we have done in Canada and applaud what we have done in Ontario, I am extremely concerned that the things that lie ahead are challenges that will take more than individuals, a collective force, to make sure that the discrimination, whether by race or class or colour, can be dealt with without being partisan and without regarding it as a fiscal issue more than a human rights issue. Today I am very proud to know that we continue to have a Parliament that can stand up to say we have to do more with regard to human rights. Thank you very much.

ORAL QUESTIONS

IPPERWASH PROVINCIAL PARK

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): My question is to the Premier. He will know that at noon today, senior members of our faith community met at Ipperwash Provincial Park. They issued a communication to you calling for a commitment for a full public inquiry into the events surrounding the shooting death of our first nations' Dudley George. Signing this were, among others, the archbishop of the Diocese of Huron in the Anglican Church, the Roman Catholic Diocese of Hamilton, the Roman Catholic Diocese of London, the moderator of the United Church, the League for Human Rights of B'nai Brith.

Eleven senior members of our faith community sent a personal memo to you, Premier, requesting that you hold a public inquiry. What do you plan to say to those senior members of our faith community?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I plan to refer that and the letter to the Attorney General.

1410

Hon Charles Harnick (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): As I have said before, the incident at Ipperwash was a tragedy but the government has been clear and consistent that it will only consider other options after matters currently before the courts have been completed. We have indicated that that is the position of the government. We've made that very clear. There are court cases going on, both of a criminal and a civil nature, and we will consider other options once those legal matters have been completed.

Mr Phillips: Premier, I'll go back to you because it was our faith community that raised a very serious matter with you, and you personally. This is International Human Rights Day. They directed the question to you, Premier. They want a commitment. You don't have to begin the inquiry until all legal impediments are out of the road, but they want a commitment from you.

I talk often with first nations and they tell me: "Mike Harris will never call an inquiry. He's afraid of it. He will delay and delay and delay and delay." They say, "Gerry, you'll get nowhere because Mike Harris will refuse to call an inquiry." You won't even commit to call an inquiry.

I say to you again, Premier, that senior members of our faith community have called on you — you personally, you directly — to commit to holding a public inquiry. You can do it when all the legal impediments are out of the road. But I say again to you, Premier, the faith community of Ontario and all of Ontario are looking for you personally to stand today and answer: Will you commit to a full public inquiry into the shooting death of Dudley George as soon as all legal impediments are out of the road?

Hon Mr Harnick: Certainly I will say again that the government has been clear and consistent. It will only consider other options after the issues that are before the court are dealt with, and then that consideration will take place.

Mr Phillips: Premier, I'll go back to you. You have an obligation to Ontario, you have an obligation to our faith community, you have an obligation to first nations to say that they're wrong, that you're not going to stonewall this, you're not going to delay and delay and delay and hope it will go away. I give our faith community a lot of credit. As usual, when a voice is being silenced, our faith community has the courage to stand up and speak for that voice that you're trying to silence. Nothing could be more fundamental than this issue: the treatment of our first nations, the shooting death for the first time in this century of a member of our first nations.

We have heard from you several stories. You said they were armed; they were unarmed. You said there was no evidence of a burial ground; we found there was evidence of a burial ground. You said there was no direction given to the police; we found that you instructed the police to remove the occupants. There were 52 charges laid, and 43 of them you dropped, Premier.

The question is this: Will you today commit to our first nations to hold a full public inquiry —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you.

Hon Mr Harnick: The member outlines a set of facts that he really has no basis to outline, because they are just not accurate. The government has been clear and consistent.

Mr Phillips: Prove me wrong. I'll go anywhere you want. Prove me wrong.

The Speaker: Member for Scarborough-Agincourt, come to order.

Hon Mr Harnick: The minutes that the member has reflect exactly what has happened. First of all, he knows

that the government would not negotiate on substantive issues while the occupation continued. Second of all, it indicates that no direction was given to the OPP regarding negotiations.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): It says to get them out of the park ASAP.

The Speaker: Member for Algoma, come to order, please.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Member for Scarborough-Agincourt, come to order, please.

Interjections.

Hon Mr Harnick: Finally, the evidence is very clear that the only step that the government took was to seek a civil injunction. That is the only step that the government took.

Interjections.

Hon Mr Harnick: I will reiterate: Insofar as the OPP is concerned, they received no direction. This was confirmed by the commissioner, and the only step the government took was to seek a civil injunction.

COMMUNITY CARE

Mr Alex Cullen (Ottawa West): My question is to the Minister of Health. The minister will know that, from April 1st of this year to date, the Ottawa-Carleton Community Care Access Centre has experienced a 12% increase in demand for homemaking services and an 8% growth in demand for visiting nursing services. In order to meet this need, Ottawa-Carleton CCAC requested \$3.1 million over the approved 1996-97 budget from your ministry in order to support this increase in need and address the projected growth in acute and long-term-care programs.

We know this increase in demand is a direct result of your government's cuts to hospital operating budgets. Our hospitals have been forced to lay off staff, cut services and implement increasingly aggressive discharge policies. Tragically, the CCAC has received word from you recently, Minister, that you have refused their request for funding. As a result, the CCAC is now forced to implement a number of major service adjustments, including reducing the number of homemaking hours per client per month; implementing a four-month waiting time for clients who need homemaking-only services; reducing the number of nursing visits; capping the number of clients per month; reducing the number of hours of shift nursing for palliative care.

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health): I would refer that to the minister responsible for seniors.

Hon Cameron Jackson (Minister without Portfolio [Seniors Issues]): I want to thank the member opposite for his question. I also want to acknowledge that his office, along with all the members of the Ottawa region offices, attended a meeting which I had with the CCAC in Ottawa some three weeks ago at which time we discussed concerns expressed by increased demand associated with home care access in the greater Ottawa area.

I want to remind the member that at that time I undertook a proposal to review their current budget. We have notified the Ottawa CCAC of our willingness to sit down and discuss with them the fact that service delivery for community care in this province will continue to be extended on an expanded basis across this province, but that services will only be available as long as they're needed by seniors and the disabled in Ontario.

1420

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): Supplementary to the Minister of Health: A report on home care services released today showed very clearly the impact that the cuts are having and your hospital closures are having. It showed a tremendous gap and an imbalance in services right across this province. In my own region of Hamilton-Wentworth, this report shows that there's at least a \$4-million shortfall in home care funding.

A baby discharged in Hamilton-Wentworth who needs home care in Hamilton, compared to other communities, is in bad shape. Actually 6.1 out of 100 babies in Hamilton-Wentworth have access to home care compared to, say, 40 in Kingston. Pregnancy problems: Seven moms in every 100 have access compared to 40 in Kingston. Mental health: Before you closed the Hamilton Psychiatric Hospital, 8.5 of 100 had access to home care compared to 21 in Durham. There is a crisis today. Your closures, your cutbacks are adding to that crisis in Hamilton-Wentworth.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Question, please.

Mr Agostino: I'd like to ask you, Minister, will you admit that your cuts are now hurting home care? Second, will you admit and guarantee that you will fund every single —

The Speaker: Thank you. Minister.

Mr Agostino: Your cuts, Jim —

The Speaker: Member for Hamilton East, come to order.

Mr Agostino: Why don't you answer the question, Jim?

The Speaker: I warn you, member, I'm going to name if you don't come to order. Minister.

Hon Mr Jackson: I want to remind the member opposite that it was his government that stood on this side of the House in 1987 and promised one-window access and a coordinated, accountable home care system in this province and for five years of that government's life it did nothing.

This government has implemented increased funding, and Hamilton-Wentworth has received about an 80% increase in funding since 1991-92. We would also indicate that it is this government that made the commitment to increase funding, which is now over \$2.2 billion for home care and facility services for the frail elderly and the disabled in this province. It's a record we're proud of. But the record we're not proud of is the failure of the past two governments to get a coordinated system of delivery and patients suffered as a result of that.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Member for Nepean, if you want to raise a point of order I'm willing to listen. No? Supplementary.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): Minister, in the Niagara region, as you would know, patients and their families are being told that home care services will be cut and that people in vulnerable health care situations and medical circumstances will either be forced to pay out of their own pocket for very costly health care services or be forced to go without.

Five hospitals in the Niagara region are threatened with closure by the Harris government, despite the promise of the Premier that he wouldn't close any hospitals. Even without those hospitals being closed, there is a crisis in home care.

Would the minister commit in the House today — and perhaps I should ask the Premier to commit to give the money to the minister — would the minister implore the Premier of this province to provide sufficient funds for his ministry to be able to meet the existing needs in the Niagara region for home care, and would he inform the Premier that it is impossible to close the five hospitals that are under the axe in the Niagara region without causing great damage to the health care system in the Niagara Peninsula?

Hon Mr Jackson: I want to thank the member for St Catharines for his question, because he did accompany me some five weeks ago when I called him and asked him if he would attend with me at the meeting of the CCAC in Niagara. At that time we reviewed the fact that, in spite of the fact that this government has increased funding to Niagara region by 26%, we are experiencing some pressures in that area that may be as a result of increased funding from this government with respect to hip and knee surgeries and a variety of other discharging challenges that we are finding in the Niagara Peninsula.

At that time I had an undertaking from the member for St Catharines and all members in the Niagara Peninsula that we would sit down with the CCAC and examine the best way to better manage the large amount of resources. On provincial comparisons Niagara is doing very well. In fairness to the residents of Niagara, and the member opposite is aware of this, we have a greater number of senior citizens in the Niagara Peninsula than anywhere in the province. That is not unknown to this government and that is why I was in Niagara Falls and St Catharines to review their budgets with the honourable member a few weeks ago. But I will undertake to further —

The Speaker: New question, leader of the third party.

ARREST OF PROTESTERS

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): My question is to the Premier. On December 1, the day your government rammed Bill 160 through this Legislature, a number of students were prevented from coming into the galleries to watch the vote. As a result and out of frustration, they went outside and conducted a protest in the street against Bill 160 and your cuts to education. The police arrived

and at least four of the students were taken to 52 Division, where they were charged with mischief, and one 15-year-old was held for several hours and was not informed of her right to retain counsel.

Premier, do you think this is an appropriate way to treat students who merely protested against your Bill 160 and against your cuts to education?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I am not aware of what they did, who arrested them, whose rights were violated or how it happened. I have nothing to do with the police, I have nothing to do with what goes on with actions outside this building, so I don't know why you're asking me.

Mr Hampton: Premier, I would assume that someone in your government would know something about this. You'd know about it before I did because this is a very serious matter. These were children. We're talking about a 13-year-old boy, one of them, and a 15-year-old girl.

Among other things, what happened is they were taken to 52 Division and they were detained for several hours. The 13-year-old boy was subjected to a body search and the 15-year-old girl was subjected to a body search. Premier, do you know what's involved in a body search? Do you know what it would be like for a 13-year-old boy to be subjected to a body search and for a 15-year-old girl to be subjected to a body search? All they did was protest against your government's education agenda.

I ask you again, Premier, do you think this is the appropriate way for children to be treated when they demonstrate against the government?

Hon Mr Harris: I think it's fair to point out, since you're on the record talking about an involvement here, that ejection from here has nothing to do with us; it's under the Speaker. You're free to raise that with the Speaker at any opportunity you'd like.

I have no briefing note; I am not aware of it. If you're talking about Metro police, I'd be happy to forward your comments on to Maureen Prinsloo, who is head of the police services board, or to Alan Tonks of Metro council.

Mr Hampton: I'm going to send the Premier a copy of the Charter of Rights.

We just heard the government stand and announce today that it salutes the 49th anniversary of the UN Declaration of Human Rights. This is what the Canadian Charter of Rights says:

"Everyone has the right to be secure against unreasonable search or seizure.... Everyone has the right on arrest or detention...to retain and instruct counsel without delay and to be informed of that right.... Everyone has the right not to be subjected to any cruel and unusual treatment or punishment."

The only reason these young students were subjected to a body search and the treatment they were subjected to is because of intimidation. We saw it out here during the OPSEU strike, we saw it at Ipperwash, and we saw it with these young students. That's exactly what's happened.

My question is this. What kind of example about human rights and democracy have you set —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you.

Hon Mr Harris: I'm happy to raise your case with the chair of the police services board. I don't have a briefing note; I'm not aware. I might add that I don't know whether you're asking me to get involved and give direction to the Metro police. We don't get involved with the provincial police, let alone the Metro police. I think that's well understood.

I would further add, that as a former Attorney General, your question is an insult to the job.

The Speaker: New question, third party, leader of the third party.

Mr Hampton: My next question is to the Minister of Health, but I would say to the Premier what happened to those children is an insult and the way you react to it is an even greater insult.

1430

COMMUNITY CARE

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): To the Minister of Health: You're in the process of closing 30 hospitals, you've cut \$650 million from hospital budgets, and all the while you've been saying that those services you're cutting from hospitals will now be available through community care access centres. It's great rhetoric. Unfortunately for the people of Ontario, that's all it is; it's rhetoric. We've found that 22 of the 43 community access centres around this province don't have adequate health care funding from your government to meet the health care needs of the people in their communities. They're already in a deficit situation.

Minister, can you tell us, what are the people of Ontario supposed to do? They can't get the health care services from the hospital any more because you cut them and they can't get them at the community care access centres because you won't fund them. Where are they supposed to get the health care services?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health): Mr Speaker, I would refer that to the minister.

Hon Cameron Jackson (Minister without Portfolio [Seniors Issues]): First of all, I have indicated that we inherited a patchwork of services that had been underfunded, not regulated, not coordinated, no consistent form of assessment for persons. In fact, communities in this province were receiving in some instances four times more service than other parts of the province.

The truth of the matter is that this government has injected additional dollars into this program and is working now with our community partners to ensure that we have a consistent level of delivery of services across this province. We're proud that we're managing that part of the program.

Mr Hampton: I addressed my question to the Minister of Health. I guess she can't answer it because she's searching for a vision for Conservative health care in Ontario.

But the reality is this: Your government has no problem affording a \$5-billion tax gift to the wealthiest people in Ontario. That's not a problem for your government. You

can find the \$5 billion for your wealthy friends without any trouble, but the Niagara Community Care Access Centre is \$3.6 million short and has been forced to cut nursing care by 22% and care for people who live at home by 50%.

In Ottawa-Carleton you've left the community care access centre \$3 million short and they're having to make the same kind of cuts, and it's happening at 22 community care access centres around the province. In Metro Toronto you cut hospitals by \$105 million last year and the six community care access centres have experienced a 20% increase in the demand for health care services. But there's no money.

Minister, you can find the money for your tax gift. Why can't you find the money for health care?

Hon Mr Jackson: I want to remind the member opposite that the legacy of health care reform in this province for 10 years was to reduce the total number of beds in this province by 10,000 without closing a single hospital and to promise seniors and the disabled in this province that we would have one-window access, we'd have a coordinated system of home care delivery and then not deliver it — and then stand in this House and ask the question, why are the services not in place?

I want to remind the member that those services are in place. This government is proud of the fact that it was the first government in a decade to implement 43 community care access centres, coordinated one-window access for seniors and the disabled in this province. We're proud of a \$140-million injection into support services —

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): What about the deficits there?

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Member for Beaches-Woodbine, come to order, please.

Mr Hampton: My second question was to the Minister of Health as well, but I guess she's still searching for the vision, because I certainly didn't get an answer here.

I'll recite the reality again: This government has no trouble finding \$5 billion to give a tax gift to their wealthy friends, but people all across this province are now going without health care. They can't get it at the hospitals because you're closing 30 hospitals, and the hospitals that you're not closing, you've taken \$650 million out of their budgets. They can't get the health care services at the community care access centres because 22 out of 43 haven't been adequately funded by you.

What's happening here is this: Those people who can't get the health care services in the hospital and can't get them at the community care access centres have to go out and purchase it privately. That's what's happening. This is privatization of Ontario's health care system by the back door: You cut the hospital, you don't provide the funding to the community care access centre, you force people to buy it privately.

Minister, is that your vision of health care, privatization by the back door? Is that what's happening here?

Hon Mr Jackson: The member opposite's vision of health care reform is still logged in old ideology. The truth

of the fact is that the member opposite is prepared to argue that the tax cut is a problem —

Interjections.

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon Mr Jackson: This government made a conscious decision to upsize and increase the financial support to home care in this province as its first step, before a single hospital closed in this province. Over \$140 million has gone into home care and 100 million extra dollars has gone into the facility side. That is \$2 million a day that is being spent on home care in this province. Your government refused to act on those reforms.

I want to remind the member opposite that the revenue lost from the federal government of over \$2 billion has been more than adequately replaced by the tax cut that has generated new revenues in Ontario —

The Speaker: Thank you.

CASINOS

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a question for the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations about the new Mike Harris gambling halls he's trying to force on communities across Ontario, the gambling halls that voters rejected overwhelmingly and emphatically during the last municipal elections in referendums and plebiscites.

Minister, your former assistant, Mr Paul Burns, also the former chauffeur of the Premier, Mike Harris, told Metro Councillor Judy Sgro that the gambling promotion firm RPC Gaming had been granted a charity casino for North York. He said to her when she reminded him of the big No vote, "We have a contract with the province to put a casino into North York and, since it's going to happen, I'd like to work with you." It sounds like a done deal to me.

Will you reveal the contents and terms of these contracts between the Harris government and the gambling promoters, given these deals for the 44 charity casinos you've announced, or are you going to continue to keep the terms of the deals a secret from the people of Ontario?

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations): The member for St Catharines knows how things work. I assume he still remembers. The fact is that while the contracts have not been signed, they are not public; they are confidential. When the contracts are signed, they become public. That's the way the system works. That's the way the system worked under you.

I really did look at this article. We had this little exchange on December 8. It was actually almost the same question and we talked about this a little bit. The fact of the matter is that the Toronto Star was using hearsay. Judy Sgro said that someone else said this. I would remind you again that Judy Sgro ran for your Liberal cousins in the federal election, so perhaps there is some sort of interest there.

Mr Bradley: No matter how much he paid to Jan Dymond — \$2,600 a day for political advice — nobody cares about that stuff. We care about what you're going to do.

The former Management Board chairman said the following: "People in positions of authority who have access to confidential or inside information cannot use it to gain an unfair advantage. Individuals are also prohibited from switching sides if they are involved in a government transaction. For instance, if they had worked on a government tender, they cannot then go to work for any of the bidders for that tender before the contract is awarded."

Did your former political assistant, the former chauffeur of the Premier, have anything at all to do with establishing the terms of reference for these charity casino contracts, and if this is not a done deal, what escape clauses are contained in these secret deals and how much will they cost the people of Ontario? Did your former assistant have anything at all to do with this file before taking on his new responsibilities?

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: I might as well refer again to what we said on December 8 because it's the same question again. I said:

"I'll answer the same way as I did before;" — so it was answered again before — "apparently it's not new news again. Mr Burns spoke to the Integrity Commissioner. The Integrity Commissioner gave him a clean bill of health. Mr Burns does not speak on behalf of this government." He doesn't work for us now.

VICTIMS OF CRIME

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): I have a question to the Attorney General. Attorney General, you know that the French and Mahaffy families have been in our Court of Appeal seeking a ruling that would bar forever any public viewing or hearing of the awful, horrible, brutal, degrading video tapes of the torture and murders of their daughters. You've talked and your government has talked a big game about the rights of victims, but you made a choice on this one. You chose to fight the French and Mahaffy families in court. Attorney General, why aren't you backing up victims this time?

Hon Charles Harnick (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): Again, as I've done many times, I extend in this horrible situation my sympathies to the victims, their families, during these ongoing proceedings. What has to be very clear is that we recognize the unique circumstances of this case and in fact we are supportive of the families' wishes that the video tapes not be disclosed in public in any future proceedings.

What the argument in court involves is something very different and something very much beyond this particular issue. We know that the tapes, which are the subject matter of the court issue, are sealed. They cannot be used. They're under court protection. The issue is the constitutionality of a section in the Criminal Code that goes beyond just the issue of the tapes.

1440

Mr Kormos: Again to the Attorney General: You had a choice. You could have either supported the application of the French and Mahaffy families or, as you chose, to oppose it and fight them in court. They are seeking a ruling that will ensure them some modest comfort, which they surely deserve, for the rest of their lives, and some comfort in the event of similar victimization down the road, that video or audio tapes of such a nature could never be viewed by the public or discussed publicly.

You could have made a difference. At the end of the day the court is going to make its decision. You could have assisted these victims. You chose to oppose them. Once again, the question put to you quite clearly, Attorney General, is, Why did you choose to fight the victims rather than support them in their bid for relief?

Hon Mr Harnick: If the member looks at the court record, he will see that is not the case, and insofar as those tapes are concerned, we've been very clear. Certainly we are supportive of the families' wishes. We are dealing with an issue that goes beyond the issue of the tapes. It involves a constitutional review of a particular section. The case remains before the court and it would be really inappropriate to comment any further.

HIGHWAY 407

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton North): My question is for the Minister of Transportation. Since October 14, this year, Highway 407 tolling began and residents have enjoyed the use of that highway. We know it goes from 404 to 410. I understand that this highway eventually will run from the QEW to Oshawa. Recently many of my constituents, and yours, I might add, have indicated there have been some traffic problems, both on the 401 and the 410 southbound. Minister, can you please tell us when the extension west of the 410 will be open for business.

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Transportation): I'd like to thank the honourable member and neighbour of mine for the question relating to Highway 407. As a co-resident of Brampton myself, I'm well aware of the importance of this transportation link to the commuters throughout our communities and to the residents of this province generally. I would at this time be pleased to inform the member that the construction of this portion of the highway is one full year ahead of schedule, and I am further pleased to announce that the next phase of Highway 407, that is the section from the 410 west to the 401, will be officially open for business this Saturday, December 13, 1997, at 2 am, and I will further add that this adds to the convenience and productivity of the citizens of Ontario.

Mr Spina: I'm very pleased to hear that. I know that all of our constituents, as well as other people, will be happy.

Minister, there's been a lot of speculation about the success or not of the 407. I wonder if you can tell us how it is succeeding. Is it? Is it not? It's been open for a couple of months. We see traffic on it. Sometimes it's heavy;

other times it's not. Can you assure the members that this highway is in fact working?

Furthermore, we understand that there are a number of residents who would like to see the completion of Highway 205. Could you comment on that, please?

Hon Mr Clement: Of course, the Highway 410 extension is a further priority of this ministry, but let me talk a little bit about the success of the 407.

In fact, the traffic volumes since tolling began are higher than originally projected. The weekday traffic has ranged from 95,000 to 115,000 trips per day, for an average of 105,000 trips per day. Over 80,000 transponders have been distributed to date, and approximately 550 registrations are still being received per day, which represents a demand of 700 transponders per day.

I would like to remind the member for Brampton North and the members of this House that the 407 was conceived and delivered as a user-pay highway 25 years ahead of schedule. It would not have been built were it not for the fact that tolling has begun and that the highway will be paid for by those who actually use the highway. We are pleased with the current success of Highway 407 and anticipate the success of that highway to continue in the years to come.

LOTTERY MACHINES

Mr Gilles E. Morin (Carleton East): My question is for the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations. I don't know anyone who would willingly want to harm children. However, a situation exists that is disturbing to members from both sides of the House. A 1994 study found that 37% of teenagers in Ontario have a problem with gambling, as compared to 8.6% of adults. It doesn't help that there are almost 700 instant ticket vending machines that are easily accessible and that allow children as young as 13 to buy lottery tickets with virtually no supervision. Minister, what will you do to address this problem?

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations): First of all, there are a number of things we have done already. Yes, it is a very grave problem to have young people have access to gaming. It's very important that we do address it. First of all, we have.

Under Bill 75, which we passed last year, we increased the penalties to ensure that anyone who would allow access to minors to any type of gaming will face some severe penalties. We're looking at penalties of \$50,000 for individuals and \$250,000 for corporations. We have reacted to many things.

I believe the issue came up last year. Someone had indicated to us that some of these machines were located in inappropriate areas that were not monitored. I had a conversation at the time with the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism, who then not only proposed to but did remove machines from unmonitored spots. Certainly this is something that's important for us to ensure — that no minors get access to gaming.

Mr Morin: Minister, over \$400,000 was spent by your ministry to correct that problem. You hired investigators. It didn't work. It still doesn't work. We open up boot camps to discipline young children, to make them good citizens, to abide by the laws of this province, and yet we tempt them every day, with 700 machines, to become addicted.

As you know, two weeks ago members from all three parties voted unanimously in favour of my private member's bill which would ban the use of ITVMs. Obviously, Bill 163 represents an issue of importance to everyone across party lines — that of underage gambling.

Minister, given the support this measure has received, will you urge the justice committee to consider this bill soon so that it can be passed as soon as possible? This is an important bill.

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: I agree with the member that no minor should have access to any type of gambling. I agree with you 100%. I will certainly pass on your comments to the Ministry of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism, under whose auspices this initiative is.

1450

ONTARIANS WITH DISABILITIES LEGISLATION

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): My question is for the Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation, and I want to offer her my sincere congratulations on her new ministerial appointment.

Minister, you know that the Premier promised during the 1995 campaign that your government would enact an Ontarians with Disabilities Act within your first term, and you know that he has in fact repeated that commitment here in the Legislature in response to questions from my leader and from myself. I'm not going to go through the quotes; I'm sure you're aware of the history.

The Ontarians with Disabilities Act Committee has met with you and subsequently has had a telephone conversation. I've got to tell you they're very concerned. In that telephone conversation — and they've confirmed this in writing to you — they said they were concerned and that you indicated that you were, in effect, starting over again and reviewing all aspects of the process leading up to and including the introduction and passage of the Ontarians with Disabilities Act.

The commitment couldn't have been clearer. By now you were supposed to have been starting the public consultation. They demand full and open public consultation. When will that public consultation begin?

Hon Isabel Bassett (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation): I am very happy and not surprised that my friend from Beaches-Woodbine would raise a question that is of concern to all of us in this House. As you know, all Ontarians — and I don't think this should be a partisan issue — want to have a province in which everybody, regardless of their ability, has access to fulfil their potential as best as possible. You know I am

committed to that. The Premier is committed to working towards the enactment of legislation for the disabled.

That said, you will understand, because members move from side to side depending on elections, when you are a new minister put in a position, you can't automatically accept absolutely every movement that has been made along the way. It doesn't mean to say that I'm tossing them out. I met with David Lepofsky very early on and in fact I told David that if I wanted a lobbyist, he'd be the first I would —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you very much. Supplementary.

Ms Lankin: Minister, this is not starting off very well. You're right that the ODA committee has been pushing very hard. They pushed your predecessor. It took months before we could get a meeting set up. Finally meetings were set up and things were moving. In fact, your predecessor made a very clear commitment. She said that legislation would be introduced by early to mid-fall 1998. If there is going to be appropriate public consultation and you're going to keep that promise, you have to be starting now.

I respect the period of time it takes a new minister to get up to speed. But this is an issue that we have been pushing in this House. We've had the Premier stand up and apologize, in response to a question from me, to the community for the lack of action on the part of your government in living up to this commitment that was in the Common Sense Revolution. There have been a lot of broken promises.

Let me ask you clearly: Are you committed to the introduction of this legislation by early or mid-fall of 1998 or is that another broken promise?

Hon Ms Bassett: There are no broken promises that I can see. I am committed to working towards this legislation as quickly as I can. Everybody in the community I have met is aware of that. Naturally, they are pushing for more.

We already have moved in some directions with the building code. We are making steps for the disabled. What you do not understand, or you do understand and aren't using it in this House today, is that members of the ODA committee do not represent a lot of people who are disabled who are consulting me privately. I have to listen to them the same way. There is going to be consultation.

FEDERAL ECONOMIC POLICY

Mr Bill Grimmett (Muskoka-Georgian Bay): My question is for the finance minister. I recently conducted a survey of small business people in my riding to ask them what issues they wanted government to address to assist them. I got a wide variety of responses, but there was a common theme: One of the greatest concerns for small businesses in my riding has to do with payroll taxes.

Minister, you recently met with your provincial counterparts in Ottawa. I wonder if you had a chance to raise this issue with them, particularly in regard to the expected federal budgetary surplus.

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): The honourable member is quite correct that all provinces' finance ministers met in Ottawa over the last two days and all provinces were unanimous as to how the federal government should use any fiscal dividend it may have next year.

First, we urged the federal government to restore basic health care funding, post-secondary education and social assistance transfers to the provinces, which they have cut by \$7 billion in the last two fiscal years — \$2.1 billion to the province of Ontario alone.

Interjections.

Hon Mr Eves: The Liberal Party members opposite can laugh at \$2 billion worth of cuts to health care in their own province if they want. I don't expect them to ever ask another question about health care.

The second area where we urged the federal government to take action was in reduction of payroll taxes, primarily employment insurance premiums, where the federal government now collects an annual surplus of \$7 billion a year, \$5 billion of which comes out of Ontario employees' and employers' pockets.

Mr Grimmett: Minister, were you able to get a commitment from the federal finance minister as to how they would deal with employment insurance?

Hon Mr Eves: With respect to employment insurance premiums, by the end of this year, in a few short days, the federal government will have a surplus accumulated of some \$13 billion in the EI account. The EI account was intended to be an employment insurance program; it was never intended to be a cash cow for the federal government on the backs of Ontario employees and employers.

All provinces again were unanimous in their approach to the federal government. They could reduce premiums from \$2.70 to \$2.20 immediately, they could totally eliminate premiums for all youth employees and employers and still have a \$2-billion-a-year surplus left in the EI account. The provinces were unanimous in this approach; the federal Liberal government refuses to accept it. They don't want to help employers and employees and they don't want to do anything to help young employees across the country.

KIDNEY DIALYSIS

Mr John C. Cleary (Cornwall): My question is to the Minister of Health. Over 18 months ago, Minister Jim Wilson promised dialysis for eastern Ontario and the Cornwall area. For the next 16 months there was a legal battle with the provider that had been picked. In August of this year, the court proceedings finally concluded and the minister still wouldn't act because he said he needed another 30 days. That's one 30 days, another 30 days and the third 30 days: over three months since the court proceedings were over and 18 months since the minister made his announcement.

Now that we have a new minister whom I've discussed the issue with on occasion, could you give us an update on the dialysis clinic for eastern Ontario and Cornwall? We

were led to believe that we would get the announcement before the end of December. If so, it would be the best Christmas present that dialysis patients and their families in eastern Ontario could get.

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health): I know the member for Cornwall is very concerned about this issue. We have discussed it, and I want to tell him at the present time we are still in ongoing discussions with the provider. It certainly would be my hope that we will soon be in a position where I would be able to give you some very positive information.

1500

Mr Cleary: I met with the Legion members and they want to know what they can do to help because it's a real necessity in eastern Ontario.

I want to know what I should tell the dialysis patients and their families who are worried about the weather conditions, those who have financial problems and those who feel they're not strong enough to make the trip to Ottawa or Kingston three times a week.

Hon Mrs Witmer: Again, I understand and I appreciate the concerns of the local community and certainly also their offer to be of assistance. We will continue to be in contact with yourself, and if there is a way in which the community can be of assistance, we will certainly make that information available to you. But I want to let you know we are doing everything possible to facilitate these discussions and bring them to a very successful resolution as quickly as possible so that those services can be provided to people in Cornwall. I anticipate that we will have an answer for you shortly.

ACCESS TO PROFESSIONS AND TRADES

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): My question is to the Minister of Citizenship. I want to draw to your attention another issue on which your government has a long-standing commitment and on which we have yet to see any real action, and that is the question of access to trades and professions.

As I'm sure you're aware, your Premier committed during the election to taking swift action on this, but two and a half years into your mandate we haven't seen very much other than a Web site. I know there have been some fact sheets that have gone out. But people in the community have certainly told your predecessor and your government that what we need in place in Ontario is what we have in other provinces of this country, which is an academic credentials assessment service that will ensure that people who have skills and trades and professions from other countries, who have that training and those qualifications in other countries, are able to get those qualifications translated promptly and fairly into the Ontario context and then are able to use those skills to get jobs at an equal value here, as opposed to having to accept lower-paying jobs or indeed, as in many cases, having to go on welfare because they can't get those jobs.

When are we going to see some real action that will result in an academic credentials assessment service put in

place in Ontario such as we have in other provinces of this country?

Hon Isabel Bassett (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation): First of all I thank you for that question, because it's something that has been bugging me for years. I have met during the OCASI conference with several people and made a commitment that we would sit down and have a committee that could help us steer and put pressure on — I see the honourable member across is saying, "Another committee." This is an advisory committee to me that would help me put pressure on the professions. As you understand, it's not the governments that are holding up this thing; it's the individual professions. I am committed to working with the professions to try and point out that we must open up the doors more so that we can get the full value of the immigrants who are coming to this society.

Mr Silipo: This is another case where the tale is really in terms of whether you're prepared to go beyond the rhetoric and beyond the façade of having a series of discussions with people. The action that is required lies in your hands as minister and in the government's hands. Yes, the professions have to come on board, the various professional bodies have to come on board, but in order for that to happen, what you need is the government taking the initiative, yes, to work with various organizations like OCASI and many of the member agencies like Skills for Change and others, but you need to put in place a process that exists in provinces like Quebec, Alberta and British Columbia, a provincial service which is an academic credentials assessment service that has buy-in from the professions, which won't happen until and unless you say as a government that you want that to happen.

Minister, I want to ask you and be very pointed: Can we expect that in six months' time we will finally see something we can call an academic credentials assessment service in this province?

Hon Ms Bassett: What we have already put in place and we are working on — hopefully they'll get there in six months: The ministry has retained Price Waterhouse to conduct a business assessment to examine the range of self-financing delivery options for accurate, fair, credible and consistent assessment of foreign academic credentials. As you know, that's one of the main drawbacks.

Second, we are developing occupational fact sheets which provide comprehensive, up-to-date information for prospective and landed immigrants on entry-to-practice requirements and job market conditions for specific professions. In some cases there's a move afoot to have those papers in the site of immigration so the people could see before they come what's lying ahead of them.

We are also supporting innovative projects by key partners, ie, licensing of professional bodies, certification boards, to produce best-practice models and tools for assessing skills, including the use of prior learning assessments. So there are a number of —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you. Minister, it's over. New question.

MALDEN PARK CONTINUING CARE CENTRE

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health): I have a response today for the member for Windsor-Sandwich, who on Monday, December 8, asked a question regarding the Malden Park centre and also asked, "Why will you not now fund it as a chronic care hospital?" I indicated at that time that I was willing to take the question under advisement and I would respond today.

First of all, I think we need to put on the record that Malden Park was built under the previous government as a long-term-care facility. In fact, in 1993, the Honourable Ruth Grier wrote to Malden Park outlining the ministry's position that Malden Park would operate as a long-term-care facility and that the relevant standards and legislation would apply. I have a copy of the letter here. It's dated December 1993. It is stated here it will be funded in this way, and it also indicates —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Supplementary.

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich): I think I was clear when I asked the question, Minister. We recognize that the NDP did not clean up this mess. We also know that you are now the minister. The only thing that is important to the people in Windsor —

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Member for Windsor-Sandwich.

Mrs Pupatello: The point, Minister, is that the people who live in Malden Park don't care whose fault it is. The people who live in Malden Park need to know that they will get the level of service required —

Interjections.

The Speaker: Members, we've got to get this question in. It's going to be the last one, but we have to hear it.

1510

Mrs Pupatello: The only thing that matters is that the people who are in the beds at Malden Park get the same level of service that they are getting today and that they got last year. While the last government red-circled this centre for appropriate funding of those beds, this government under the previous minister and the current minister is now not taking responsibility for appropriate funding, but your commission is prepared to spend up to \$25 million to refurbish old beds in some old wings when you already spent the money to build this centre. The taxpayers have already paid for these beds for chronic care.

Minister, it's inappropriate for you to waste money in health care and it's inappropriate for you not to fund these beds at appropriate levels for chronic care. I would ask you again to review the file, to look at the letter I sent you yesterday —

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon Mrs Witmer: I would indicate to the member for Windsor-Sandwich that the funding that is being provided for the residents of that facility is based on their needs and it will continue to be based on their needs.

As you know, the commission has indicated in its interim directives that there will be 180 more chronic care beds required, but there will also be 1,200 additional long-term-care spaces needed, so that is certainly indicative of

the fact that this reflects Malden Park's status as a long-term-care facility and not a chronic care hospital.

PETITIONS

PAY EQUITY

Mr Frank Miclash (Kenora): I have a petition that reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We are very concerned about the Red Cross pay equity issue. We are asking the three party leaders to put people before politics and come together in a non-partisan effort to resolve the homemakers' services pay equity problem.

"The legislation affects Red Cross differently than any other provider of homemaker services in Ontario and makes it impossible for the society to compete on a level playing field."

That's signed by many of my constituents, and I add my name to that petition as well.

PRIVATIZATION OF CORRECTIONAL SERVICES

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): I have a petition that reads:

"Whereas the government of Ontario is intending to privatize the superjails in Penetanguishene and Lindsay, Ontario; and

"Whereas the superjails will be run privately and for profit; and

"Whereas the private operation of these superjails for profit will jeopardize the safety of our communities; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario will no longer be held responsible for the operation of these superjails;

"We, the undersigned, petition the government of Ontario to stop the privatization of superjails in Ontario and continue public operation of the jails."

I endorse this petition signed by hundreds of people. I pass it on to Meghan Summers from Belleville to deliver to the Clerk.

EDUCATION REFORM

Mr Allan K. McLean (Simcoe East): I have a petition here. It says:

"Whereas the government of Ontario has not listened to the public on Bill 160; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario has chosen to overtly deceive the people of Ontario as to the objectives of Bill 160; and

"Whereas we, the people, believe that no government has a mandate to act in isolation of the wishes of the electorate of this province and we have lost confidence in this government,

"We, the undersigned electors of Ontario, petition the Lieutenant Governor to dissolve the Legislature and call a general election."

That is one of several petitions I have received with regard to Bill 160.

CASINO GAMBLING

Mr Mike Colle (Oakwood): To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas during the last election campaign Mike Harris and the Tories said they would not force casinos into communities across Ontario without the consent of the voters; and

"Whereas over 70% of Metro voters in the recent municipal election voted a resounding no to the spread of casinos into their neighbourhoods; and

"Whereas the voters of the Toronto megacity have spoken loud and clear against casinos in all of Metro's six municipalities, with over 460,000 voters saying no to Mike Harris's spread of casinos into neighbourhoods; and

"Whereas there is already too much gambling in Ontario that preys upon the most vulnerable and desperate;

"Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly that Mike Harris listen to those who voted overwhelmingly no to the spread of casinos and stop the introduction of any further casinos in Metro by Mike Harris."

I affix my name to this petition

PRIVATIZATION OF CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

Mr Floyd Laughren (Nickel Belt): "Whereas the government of Ontario is intending to privatize the superjails in Penetanguishene and Lindsay, Ontario; and

"Whereas the superjails will be run privately and for profit; and

"Whereas the private operation of these superjails for profit will jeopardize the safety of our communities; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario will no longer be held responsible for the operation of these superjails;

"We, the undersigned, petition the government of Ontario to stop the privatization of superjails in Ontario and continue public operation of the jails."

Madam Speaker, if you like, I can read the names of all the people who signed the petition, but perhaps I'll leave that to another day and affix my name to this petition.

EDUCATION REFORM

Mr Ted Arnott (Wellington): I wish to present a petition in opposition to Bill 160 that was sent to me by Ivan Parkinson and Andrew Armstrong, who are students at Norwell District Secondary School in Palmerston.

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): The following petition is in regard to Bill 160. It has been collected by Rhonda Auld and Barbara Hamibault, chairpeople from Churchill public school advisory council and Cyril Varney public school advisory council. It's simple.

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To halt the attack on the Ontario school system and withdraw Bill 160."

It's signed by over 300 people, and I affix my signature.

PRIVATIZATION OF CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

Mr Len Wood (Cochrane North): "Whereas the government of Ontario is intending to privatize the superjails in Penetanguishene and Lindsay, Ontario; and

"Whereas the superjails will be run privately and for profit; and

"Whereas the private operation of these superjails for profit will jeopardize the safety of our communities; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario will no longer be held responsible for the operation of these superjails;

"We, the undersigned, petition the government of Ontario to stop the privatization of superjails in Ontario and continue public operation of the jails."

It's signed by about 25 or 30 members, and I also affix my signature to the petition.

HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Toby Barrett (Norfolk): I have now received close to 15,000 signatures on petitions and letters concerning rural hospital care. These petitions are from Dunnville War Memorial Hospital and Hagersville-West Haldimand hospitals.

"We, the undersigned, strongly oppose the recommendations made by the district health council in its July 1997 report about health care in our community.

"We object to fewer acute care beds at West Haldimand General Hospital; a limit of three days for patients at West Haldimand General Hospital; possible downgrading of the emergency department at West Haldimand General Hospital; the district health council's involvement in selecting hospital board members; and unequal budget reductions in all three Haldimand-Norfolk hospitals."

I agree with these petitions from both hospitals and hereby affix my signature to them.

EDUCATION REFORM

Mr Pat Hoy (Essex-Kent): I have a petition that has been signed by a number of residents from St Joachim, Comber, Tilbury, Wheatley, Staples and other areas within my riding.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Bill 160 is detrimental to our education system;

"We, the undersigned, petition the legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Bill 160 should not be passed."

I affix my name to this petition.

AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): I have a number of petitions on health care.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Fort Frances ambulance dispatch not be moved to Kenora."

This is signed by several hundred residents of the Northwest Bay First Nation and a number of other communities in the Fort Frances area. I've affixed my signature as well.

ROCK MUSIC GROUP

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean): I have two petitions sent to me by Richard and Hiske Bruggink and by Myles Dear, which read as follows:

"Whereas the rock band Marilyn Manson was permitted to play a concert at the Ottawa Congress Centre on Friday, August 1, 1997; and

"Whereas Marilyn Manson's wilful promotion of hatred, violence, immorality and obscenity has been linked to teen suicides and adolescent crimes across North America; and

"Whereas by allowing Marilyn Manson to perform, the Ottawa Congress Centre, a crown agency with a public mandate, helps to legitimize the band and its unethical messages; and

"Whereas the Ontario Court (General Division) has ruled that Marilyn Manson's music does not meet the definitions of obscenity or hate literature in the Criminal Code;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to call on the Liberal government of Canada to amend the Criminal Code in order to ensure that Marilyn Manson and other people directing messages of hate and derision towards vulnerable children and youth are not permitted to perform in Canada and to ensure that messages which offend the moral and ethical sensibilities of Ontarians are not given a voice at venues financed by the taxpayers of Ontario, including the Ottawa Congress Centre."

I have affixed my own signature thereto.

1520

MALDEN PARK CONTINUING CARE CENTRE

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex South): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas it took 20 years and \$10 million in local donations to create a 225-bed chronic facility known as Malden Park; and

"Whereas this community believed that its donations were going towards the creation of a new chronic care hospital; and

"Whereas the Health Services Restructuring Commission recommends putting chronic care beds in Windsor Western Hospital at a cost of \$14 million to \$25 million; and

"Whereas the funding levels for Malden Park have been deteriorating over the past two years;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to restore funding levels to Malden Park to the average per day rate for chronic care and designate Malden Park as a complex continuing care facility, which is what this community raised \$10 million for, and to save the \$14-million to \$25-million cost required to refurbish Windsor Western as a chronic care facility."

In complete support of this I affix my signature.

PRIVATIZATION OF CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

Mr Wayne Lessard (Windsor-Riverside): I support that petition as well, but I have another one. It says:

"Whereas the government of Ontario is intending to privatize the superjails in Penetanguishene and Lindsay, Ontario; and

"Whereas the superjails will be run privately and for profit; and

"Whereas the private operation of these superjails for profit will jeopardize the safety of our communities; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario will no longer be held responsible for the operation of these superjails;

"We, the undersigned, petition the government of Ontario to stop the privatization of superjails in Ontario and continue public operation of the jails."

I affix my name to that petition as well.

ABORTION

Mr W. Leo Jordan (Lanark-Renfrew): To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario health system is overburdened and unnecessary spending must be cut; and

"Whereas pregnancy is not a disease, injury or illness and abortions are not therapeutic procedures; and

"Whereas the vast majority of abortions are done for reasons of convenience or finance; and

"Whereas the province has the exclusive authority to determine what services will be insured; and

"Whereas the Canada Health Act does not require funding for elective procedures; and

"Whereas there is mounting evidence that abortion is in fact hazardous to women's health; and

"Whereas Ontario taxpayers funded over 45,000 abortions in 1993 at an estimated \$25 million;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to cease from providing any taxpayers' dollars for the performance of abortions."

This petition is signed by 180 constituents of Lanark-Renfrew, and I affix my signature.

EDUCATION REFORM

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur): Despite the forced passage of Bill 160 last week, petitions keep flowing into our offices.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario

"Whereas sections of Bill 160 allow the government unprecedented centralized control over education in Ontario; and

"Whereas sections of Bill 160 remove our democratic rights as citizens to comment or respond to education reform; and

"Whereas sections of Bill 160 allow the government to make further massive cuts to education funding without public consultation or debate;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Amend those sections of Bill 160 listed above."

I am pleased to sign my name to this petition.

COURT DECISION

Mr Len Wood (Cochrane North): I have a petition here signed by 17 people from the town of Cochrane.

"We, the undersigned, petition the government of Ontario to introduce legislation that would make it illegal for a woman to appear topless in any public place, except in clearly marked designated beach areas."

Mr Bob Wood (London South): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the courts have ruled that women have the lawful right to go topless in public; and

"Whereas the Liberal government of Canada has the power to change the Criminal Code to reinstate such public nudity as an offence;

"We, the undersigned, respectfully petition the government of Ontario to pass a bill empowering municipalities to enact bylaws governing dress code and to continue to urge the government of Canada to pass legislation to reinstate such partial nudity as an offence."

MALDEN PARK CONTINUING CARE CENTRE

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich): This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas it took 20 years and \$10 million in local donations to create a 225-bed chronic facility known as Malden Park; and

"Whereas this community believed that its donations were going towards the creation of a new chronic care hospital; and

"Whereas the Health Services Restructuring Commission recommends putting chronic care beds in Windsor Western Hospital at a cost of \$14 million to \$25 million; and

"Whereas the funding levels for Malden Park have been deteriorating over the past two years;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to restore funding levels to Malden Park to the average per day rate for chronic care and designate Malden Park as a complex continuing care facility, which is what this community raised \$10 million for, and to save the \$14-million minimum cost required to refurbish Windsor Western as a chronic care facility."

This is several pages in length and was put together by the Royal Canadian Legion from Chatham south to Windsor.

ABORTION

The Deputy Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Further petitions, the member for Brampton North.

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton North): Thank you, Madam Speaker. You are gracious.

"To the Legislature of Ontario:

"Whereas abortion is a lifestyle choice which is never medically necessary; and

"Whereas the Ontario government's injunction against 18 pro-life citizens initiated by the NDP in 1993 is an unwarranted suppression of free speech and of peaceful and lawful activity; and

"Whereas health care workers are experiencing coercion to participate in procedures contrary to their consciences and unfair discrimination for acting according to their consciences;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario as follows:

"That public funding of abortion should cease, that the injunction against pro-life witnessing should be dropped and that the conscientious rights of health care workers be given new, explicit protection in the law."

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TAX CREDITS TO CREATE JOBS ACT, 1997

LOI DE 1997

ACCORDANT DES CRÉDITS D'IMPÔT POUR CRÉER DES EMPLOIS

Resuming the adjourned debate on the motion for second reading of Bill 164, An Act to implement job creation measures and other measures contained in the 1997 Budget and to make other amendments to statutes administered by the Ministry of Finance or relating to taxation matters / Projet de loi 164, Loi visant à mettre en oeuvre des mesures de création d'emplois et d'autres mesures mentionnées dans le budget de 1997 et à apporter d'autres modifications à des lois dont l'application relève du ministère des Finances ou qui traitent de questions fiscales.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): I am pleased to join this debate. I can't help but point out

something I've pointed out just about every time I've stood up in this House to make a speech on anything: We're talking about tax cuts here in this bill. Let me just say, and although it's not directly in this bill it's closely related, that the one thing that makes absolutely no sense at all is for Ontario to hand out a tax cut to individuals, as it will be doing once again on January 1 of next year, when at the same time we're increasing the public debt in this province.

As has been stated many times before, the public debt in this province while this government is in office will go from \$100 billion to \$120 billion, and the interest we're paying on that will have gone from \$7 billion per year to \$9 billion per year. That's very difficult to understand because interest rates have gone down. Can you imagine if interest rates were still where they were two or three or four years ago? We'd be paying much more. It makes no sense.

Today we had the Minister of Finance get up in this House in answer to a question. He was berating the federal government for not making further transfer payments to the provinces. What he's basically saying to the federal government is, "We want more money from you." He sounds like a tax-and-spend Tory to me from the sound of it. I suppose what he wants to do is get the money from the federal government and then apply it by way of a tax cut to the people of Ontario. So let's get that straight.

It makes absolutely no sense to give tax cuts while we're still running a debt, while we're still having a deficit in this province on an annual basis and while we're still increasing the debt in this province.

What I basically want to talk about today as it relates to Bill 164 is schedules F and G. Those are the two schedules that deal with the setting up of the property assessment corporation, which will be independently run from the province of Ontario.

1530

What's very interesting about it is that the one group that has made an extensive presentation on this is the Association of Municipal Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario. I'm sure the people of Ontario realize that these are the people, the civil servants, who work in each of the individual municipalities. They are not aligned with any political party or with any political group. They look after the finances of each individual municipality.

Let me just read you a comment they have made about Bill 164. This is very instructive to the people of Ontario and to the members of this Legislature. They say that the cumulative effects of Bills 106, 149 and 160, and now Bill 164, are that we no longer have a municipal property tax system. This is what the clerks and treasurers are saying in the individual municipalities in this province. They are saying that as a result of these bills we no longer have a municipal property tax system. There's a really stunning indictment of what this government is doing to local government in this province.

They go on to say that we have a provincial tax system administered by municipalities. It is a provincial tax system administered by municipalities. The province

controls the education tax. It determines classes and subclasses of land, it allocates tax ratios and transition ratios and now it may determine what will go on the tax notice as well. That I think probably says better than anything what the professional clerks and treasurers who put out the tax bills in each one of our municipalities are saying about the effects of the legislation that has been passed by this government, that in effect the tax rates aren't set locally any more and all they really are is an administration agency on behalf of the province.

Let's just examine for a moment two or three of these concepts they're talking about. The idea that the province would come along and tell the individual municipalities what they can or can no longer put on the tax notices that they send out to their individual taxpayers is absolutely unbelievable.

Why is the province doing this? Why is the province saying to the municipalities, "You cannot put anything other than what we tell you on an individual tax notice"? I would like somebody to explain that to me; perhaps the Minister of Municipal Affairs, perhaps his parliamentary assistant, perhaps the Minister of Finance. The question has been asked in the House, you may recall, on a number of different occasions and nobody's answered that question. Are they afraid that the municipalities may say something like, "The province of Ontario is causing your property taxes to rise?" Is that what they're afraid of? Because we all know that property taxes will rise; we all know that. The clerks and treasurers told us that before. AMO, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, told us that. Everybody has told them that.

We have simply come into this House on a day-to-day basis and asked the Premier, the Minister of Finance, the Minister of Municipal Affairs, who have been saying all these transfers are revenue-neutral, "Why don't you put it in writing to the municipalities?" I'm sure the municipalities would feel an awful lot better and, more so than the municipalities, the individual taxpayers would feel an awful lot better in each one of those municipalities, as a result of all these shifting different responsibilities that the municipalities are now going to be involved in, if they were given a letter in writing from the province of Ontario that in effect puts their money where their mouth is.

They're saying it's revenue-neutral. Why aren't they willing to say to the municipalities of Ontario, "If it's not revenue-neutral, if in your particular case there is a shortfall as a result of these changes, then we will make up the shortfall"? What is wrong with that? Surely to goodness, if they really believed in what they were saying, they would have no problem at all with the Minister of Finance or the Minister of Municipal Affairs actually putting out such a statement. Of course they're not going to do that, and they have told us they're not going to do that. They have talked around the issue, but they haven't really dealt with it at all. Now they've gone even one step further and they're telling municipalities exactly what they can or cannot put in a notice.

There's another aspect that is very interesting, and that is that the Association of Municipal Clerks and Treasurers also says that the new transition ratios, where there is going to be a significant shift in taxation among the different classes of real properties in the municipalities, will create an administrative nightmare for municipalities. These are the comments from our municipal clerks and treasurers, that it's going to create an administrative nightmare. It could be a vehicle for those municipalities who work with the prescribed ratios and later on discover that the figures are unacceptable, and they may demand assistance from the government.

What the people of Ontario should clearly understand is that there appears to be no one in charge provincially or indeed at the local level who knows exactly what is going to happen to the property tax system here in the province next year. The reason is that there are basically three things at work that are counteracting one another, and nobody knows exactly what the bottom line is going to be.

Number one, we've got an awful lot of restructuring going on in this province. We've seen it here in the megacity of Toronto, but we've also seen it in other areas of the province, in my own area, for example, of Kingston and The Islands. The old city of Kingston has in effect merged with two adjacent townships, Pittsburgh and Kingston townships. It's fair to say that there are going to be adjustments as a result. In some areas the taxes will go down; in some areas the taxes will go up.

If that alone were to happen, that would cause enough confusion in the whole system already to give people a real concern about what is going to happen to the property tax system. But the second issue, thrown on top of that, is the whole notion that the whole province is going through a market value assessment re-evaluation. The Minister of Municipal Affairs and the now Minister of Culture will say, "No, it is an actual value reassessment we're going through." Of course they have to say that, because you may recall that those two individuals handed out leaflets during the election of 1995 in which they both, Ms Bassett and Mr Leach, said they would never ever impose market value assessment.

We've seen in this House in a number of different debates and in a number of different examples I've given, by actually giving the definition of "market value assessment" and "actual value assessment," that it's exactly the same thing; there's no difference. They've just given it a different name, I assume so those two individuals can go back to their particular ridings and say, "What's really happening is different from what I said was never going to happen on the little piece of paper that I handed out during the election campaign."

But to all intents and purposes, the entire province is being re-evaluated, and that's going to make some differences. I know that the well-meaning provincial officials we have in the various assessment departments will give you all sorts of ideas in terms of what will happen in individual municipalities with regard to what percentage of properties will go up or down, but in actual fact what usually happens later on is that the fluctuation is much

greater than that. Nobody really knows what those numbers are going to be.

Then of course we have the third major factor, and that was the downloading bill, Bill 152, in which a number of services that have always been dealt with by the province of Ontario will now be funded exclusively or to a much larger extent at the local level.

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Ambulance services will be funded at the local level; social housing, on which even the province admits the municipalities are picking up something like \$905 million in extra costs. Welfare costs are going to be split on a 50-50 basis rather than on an 80-20 basis, and that's going to cost \$2 billion more than was anticipated. Public health, for the first time ever — I shouldn't say ever. I guess maybe back in the 1960s public health was funded at the local level, and then enlightened governments said: "No. We want to make sure there are standards across Ontario. It's going to be funded as part of the health care package of delivery of services that the province is involved in." The province took over most of it, but now that's going back to the local municipalities to be funded on a municipal basis.

We can just go on and on. We know all about those services that municipalities will now have to pay for, and what came off at the other end is about \$2.5 billion in education taxes. But as municipalities have been saying throughout, there is still at least a \$600-million difference between the amounts that are coming off the property tax roll and the amount that's going on to the property tax roll.

When you add those three things together, which are all happening at the same time, no one seems to know, and certainly no one within the provincial ministry knows, exactly what the effect is going to be on the average person out there who has owned a home for a number of years, on those who have lived in single-family dwellings and duplexes clear across this province, who have honestly and faithfully paid their real estate taxes on a yearly basis. I can tell you that those people don't know what they are going to have to pay next year, and the reason they don't know is that the government has never revealed the figures as to what they're going to pay next year. The local municipalities don't know what the bills are going to be next year. They have been asking the province for help to try to sort this out.

I can tell you that according to my own personal assessment, the people probably won't know exactly what they're going to be paying when they get their first tax bill next year, because their first bill next year will probably be based on a percentage of last year's tax bill, but when they get their second or third tax bill next year, when all these costs have finally been sorted out and the re-assessments have finally taken place, the people may find out that if they were paying \$1,500 per year for property taxes, it may be \$1,800 or \$1,900, or if they were paying \$3,000, it may be \$4,000 or \$4,200.

I predict that will be some time next May or June. That's when we'll finally know what the real costs are going to be with respect to all these property tax changes

to the average Ontarian who owns their own home and is trying to make a go at life in Ontario today.

I think it is very important that the people of Ontario realize that their own municipal clerks and treasurers, people who they probably see in the grocery store or at the market on a Saturday afternoon, people who have devoted their whole lives to making sure the property tax bills were prepared and delivered and distributed in a proper and efficient manner in each municipality, themselves don't know what's going to happen next year, and the province won't tell them or give them any inkling at all as to what's going to happen next year. We'll just have to wait and see. I can almost be assured that most Ontarians will be extremely disappointed and will be paying much higher property taxes than they will this year.

The other thing that's very interesting, in other aspects of items that are dealt with in Bill 164, deals with errors that the government has made with respect to Bill 149 and Bill 160. I guess what this talks to is the real incompetence and haste and bully aspect of this government.

You may recall, Madam Speaker, that on a number of occasions in the last couple of weeks, the Speaker has had to rule on such issues as whether or not amendments to Bill 160 that are contained in Bill 164 were in proper order, because at that time Bill 160 and Bill 149 had not as yet been passed or given royal assent. It is a matter the Speaker had to deal with, and yes, the Speaker eventually ruled that 164 was not out of order. But the mere fact —

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean): Bill 149.

Mr Gerretsen: Bill 149. You're right. For once you're right. You've got the right number. But the fact that the Speaker even had to deal with an issue like that shows you the haste and arrogance of this government. Why didn't they get it right in the first place?

Mr David Tilson (Dufferin-Peel): They did.

Mr Gerretsen: They did not, sir, because there are amendments right in this act. Let me just tell you what the clerks and treasurers say about this, if I can find it here in my lengthy notes that I have prepared for this occasion.

This is in schedule F, section 3. I've only got 45 seconds left. It states that, "On the later of the day this section comes into force and the day the Fair Municipal Finance Act...being Bill 149...receives royal assent, section 71 of that act, as numbered in the version of Bill 149 reprinted as amended by the finance and economic affairs committee, is repealed and the following substituted."

As the municipal clerks and treasurers say, isn't that wonderful? The government wants to amend legislation that it hasn't even passed yet. That surely has to be a first. Why didn't they do it right the first time? My assessment is that they're bullies, that they're just pushing ahead, and rather than getting it right the first time, they would much rather cause chaos and confusion in Ontario.

Madam Speaker, thank you for your kind attention.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Questions and comments.

Mr Wayne Lessard (Windsor-Riverside): I think the member for Kingston and The Islands made some

excellent points in that he said it really makes no common sense to be offering tax cuts to taxpayers in Ontario when the government is continuing to run a deficit, and it makes even less sense to be asking the federal government to increase their tax payments to the provinces at a time that they're running a deficit as well, because we know what these guys are going to do with the money. They're just going to pass that on in the form of a tax cut to their rich friends.

He also posed the question as to why this government would want to prevent municipalities from putting additional information on their tax bills. It really is an interesting question, why this government would want to muzzle the right to free speech of municipalities. Why would they want to invoke censorship on municipalities when they are sending out notices to municipal taxpayers? Maybe they're afraid that municipalities are going to begin a counter-revolution to the Common Sense Revolution and they're going to bring in those radical insurrectionists, the members of the Association of Municipal Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario, along with them as well.

He also said that taxes are going to be going up in some areas; taxes are going to be going down in some areas. If his area is like mine, we expect that those taxes are going to go up.

Today in the Windsor Star, Mayor Ed Renaud from the town of Tecumseh said that "provincial downloading is not revenue-neutral and could mean stiff tax increases for local ratepayers next year.

"They (the Ontario government) have made sure the province of Ontario will be taken care of and municipalities will be made the scapegoats for tax increases," the mayor said." That's what they expect in Tecumseh, a town where I grew up when I was a youngster.

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Mr Baird: I would like to comment on the speech by my friend from Kingston and The Islands. I always enjoy his speeches. He spoke about the property tax forms and why there would be the same form. I'm pleased to provide him with information on that.

This measure would ensure consistency of tax bill reporting methods in order to increase transparency and understanding for taxpayers. Consistency in tax bills builds on one of the more key principles of property tax reform: that taxpayers, no matter where they live or operate a business, should be able to easily compare their tax burden to make sure it's fair. They are free to include other information with that tax form and are of course free to send things under separate cover.

I look at my own tax bill, which I have a copy of right here. It's very confusing. It's not straightforward; it's not transparent. There is no indication with respect to changes in the mill rate. It's very confused. Of course, no tax increase in Nepean for the last four or five years. What we want is a more transparent system.

He also mentioned the property tax assessment corporation in the bill. When the Liberal government was elected in 1985 it implemented a review of local taxation

called Taxing Matters, and indicated a desire to deliver on promises to devolve assessment service delivery to the municipal sector. In April 1990 the then Liberal Minister of Revenue introduced a bill into the Legislature in support of the government's budget, establishing a crown corporation called the Property Assessment Corp. So even the Liberal Minister of Revenue, the honourable member for Essex South, Remo Mancini, agreed with that principle.

What I thought was most interesting, as did my colleague the member for Windsor-Walkerville, was that he talked about tax cuts, cutting taxes before the budget was balanced. Who else promised to cut taxes before the budget was balanced? Lyn McLeod and the Liberal Party. All the Liberal MPPs ran — I have a press release, "McLeod reinforces commitment to cut taxes," a \$2-billion tax cut. I thought, was that in year five when they were going to start that, once the budget was balanced? No, it started in year one. If you elected a Liberal government, right away they were going to start to cut taxes because they know tax cuts create jobs.

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): I want to commend the member for Kingston and The Islands on his speech. As usual, it touched on a number of the important elements in this bill. One the member failed to bring to the attention of this House is that this is an omnibus tax bill; that is what this really is.

I just want to point out that one of the sections of this bill deals with the government placing a new tax on northern drivers. The \$37 fee that all northerners will have to pay to license their cars every year has been placed on motorists in northern Ontario. The government does not seem to understand that there are increased costs in northern Ontario for operating a vehicle. There are increased distances. Any northerner who goes to the gas pumps knows the cost of operating vehicle in northern Ontario is tremendously more.

I've been waiting for a government member to stand up and explain this \$37 tax grab from the people of northern Ontario on all their vehicles, when at the same time they've reduced registration on vehicles in some parts of Ontario. Northerners don't really understand why this particular \$37 fee on northern vehicles needs to be included. We think the government, in its wisdom, has decided that northerners should have more money extorted from them and that the people of northern Ontario have to pay more money to get fewer services.

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): I am pleased to respond to the member for Kingston and The Islands. I too thought it was interesting that he commented on the issue of the conformity of tax bills and tax notices that will go out. I listened with interest to the government member's response to that and the rather weak explanation that this is for transparency, "This is so we can show fairness."

If you really want to have transparency then I suggest that all of the additional costs that are being downloaded by the province on to municipalities, which are going to force the municipalities to increase taxes, should be

attributed to the provincial government on those tax notices. That's all the municipalities want to do and this measure is explicitly there to prohibit them from doing that.

I also want to comment on the member's journey through the legislative process as he talked about Bill 164 and how it was amending another bill that hadn't even been passed because the government moved so quickly on the first bill, that they had errors didn't have time to correct it and didn't want to go to committee.

Some of this might sound a little arcane, but I'll tell you, in this last week or so we've seen a major tax bill tabled, an omnibus bill, Bill 164; we've seen the Milk Act tabled; we believe, if it hasn't come already, there is a budget bill number 3 coming on fuel taxes, all of which the government wants to introduce and have second and third reading done by the end of next week.

I can't think that is anything but incompetence in governing. The problem with it is, when there is not the opportunity for the House to have full reflection on these pieces of legislation, an opportunity to see all the detail, to work through it and to talk to people outside, mistakes get made, bad laws get passed. Then the government has to bring in further bills to fix the problems.

I suggest it is a moment in time here, as we approach the holiday season, where the government should rethink its strategy and understand that good governing means listening to people. It's a lesson this government needs to learn.

Mr Gerretsen: I'd like to thank the members for Windsor-Riverside, Nepean, Algoma-Manitoulin and Beaches-Woodbine for their comments.

I hear more about history in this House, about what other governments did in 1985, in 1990, what have you. Do you want to know something? The people out there don't care. They want to know what this government is going to do. They want to know what the future holds for them. Quite frankly, I am absolutely convinced that the average person out there couldn't give a hoot what happened in 1980, 1985 or 1990. What are you going to do and why are you making it a lot worse than it is right now?

If you want to have true transparency, why don't you make it a regulation that on each tax bill it shows not only what the tax bill is going to be for this year, but also what those same taxpayers were paying last year? Then you'll find out whether people are paying more or not, because they will be able to see it right on their bill. Why don't you give me that sort of guarantee? Then people will be able to see exactly how much the downloading is going to cost.

He talked about the Ontario Property Assessment Corp. It could be that the former Liberal government had that idea as well, but I wonder, sir, whether or not that Property Assessment Corp included a clause such as the present one has in it, which states that the minister will "establish policies, procedures and standards for the provision of assessment services by the corporation." In other words, we've got a situation where the municipal taxpayers are going to pay for the property tax corporation

but the province is going to set all the rules and regulations and is going to tell them what they can or cannot do. I ask you, sir, is that fair? If the old bill did, it shouldn't have included that either. I think he who pays the piper — what's the expression again? Whoever pays should be making up the rules for it.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Lessard: This is just another chapter in a litany of bills that have fancy titles that have a whole lot to do with public relations and really don't have anything to do with what's actually included in the bill.

This bill is An Act to implement job creation measures, blah, blah, blah after that, but we know that this really has nothing to do with job creation and not very much to do with tax credits either. This is a bill that's jammed full of items. We know it's 199 pages long. For most people it would be time consuming to sift through everything that is in this bill, but there are people who are out there who are interested in knowing what's in this bill. I think that's a reason we should be encouraging the government members to have, and they should be agreeing to have public hearings on some of the important items that are in this bill.

One of the things this bill does is introduce amendments to a bill, Bill 149, we just debated a mere couple of weeks ago. It corrects some of the mistakes that were made in that bill, and rather than get it done right — finish Bill 149 and introduce amendments during committee of the whole — this government wanted to ram through that legislation, introduce amendments in Bill 164 before that bill had even been passed, even though they knew that bill had serious flaws.

What this bill, Bill 164, really does is demonstrate the incompetence of this government, their failure to manage the agenda, their failure to deal with legislation on a competent basis and take the time to ensure that the legislation they're introducing and passing is doing what they set out to do.

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What this bill also really does is show how this government is not only moving too far, too fast but they're moving in the wrong direction as well. They're failing to listen; they demonstrate that on a regular basis. This is not only a demonstration of that incompetence but is taking us into a headlong dash in the wrong direction.

One of the things Bill 164 does is it introduces a section, appendix G — that's what it is, it's buried in the middle of this bill — to establish the Ontario Property Assessment Corp. This is another piece of the Who Does What recommendations that came from the mega-week announcements that download \$120 million of provincial responsibilities on to municipalities, you'll recall.

I think it's important for people to know that the assessment work that is being done right now is being done by 1,700 members of the Ontario Public Service Employees Union. We have some questions and they have some questions about what is going to happen to their employment when this corporation gets established. I believe that's an important question that should be answered during committee hearings.

Also, municipalities are going to be picking up the tab for this assessment work beginning on January 1, 1998, but they're not going to have any say as to how this work is going to be done. This is really another example and raises the issue of municipalities having to pay for services when they have no say as to the way they're going to be done.

David Crombie and his Who Does What panel said that transferring assessment "should occur when the revised assessment system has been stabilized." "Moving sooner," according to Crombie, "could jeopardize the accuracy and the quality of assessments and undermine the integrity of the process."

When it was anticipated that this legislation was going to be introduced, I received a call from a fellow who works in the Windsor assessment office who had some questions about what this was going to mean for his employment and for the employment of about 50 other people who are currently working in the Windsor office. He makes some comments about the type of service that may be anticipated in the future once this corporation is fully implemented.

He said in an e-mail to me that the contracting out of services to companies like Sentinel life underwriters, who was awarded the contract to provide maintenance services across Ontario and provide assessments of new homes in their area, was doing the work of qualified assessors and that when that work was contracted out, the public really wasn't getting the quality of work that they should have been getting or would have been getting from people who were doing assessment work who were well qualified in the Windsor offices.

Mr Mero is a person who has taken the proper educational path, he's graduated from the appropriate training, and makes the point that if this government is really interested in improving the quality of education in the province, why is it that they would be contracting out services to corporations and individuals who have people working for them who don't have the same high level of qualifications as the people who are currently doing that job.

Finally, he poses the question, "Does that make any common sense to you?" I think that's a very good question and is one that is worthy of public scrutiny during hearings.

We're concerned as to what's going to happen to the employment of people who are currently providing assessment services at local offices like Windsor. At the very least, we would be interested in introducing an amendment to this legislation that would ensure that the government uses its best efforts to make sure that this public corporation retains the services of the qualified assessors who are currently doing that job. We think that's an important amendment and that's something we should be permitted to do during the course of public hearings with respect to this bill.

Something else Bill 164 does that's been mentioned already is that it permits regulations to govern the content of property tax notices. It's a form of censorship on municipalities to prevent them from conveying information

to taxpayers that they feel is relevant. I think it makes a lot of sense for taxpayers to know what the cost of the downloading of services is going to be to municipalities. We've heard that for some taxpayers the taxes are going to go up; for some they may go down.

We know in the city of Windsor, based on the calculations that have been received so far, there's probably going to be a \$20-million shortfall in the amount of services that are going to be downloaded on to the municipality. Where is that money going to come from? It can only come from increases in property taxes. I think the reason for those taxes or the increase in taxes or the cost of the services that are being downloaded on to municipalities is important information for taxpayers to know. There are a lot of people who are asking for that information, not only municipalities but taxpayers as well, who are saying, "Please provide to us the cost of those services that are going to be downloaded on us so that we can begin budget deliberations in our municipalities."

I listened to the treasurer in the city of Windsor a couple of months ago when he was making a presentation to city councillors and he really likened the downloading of services on to the municipalities as giving the provincial government access to the city's chequebook. That was the way he classified it. They are expected to take on these services beginning January 1, 1998. Those are going to be services like policing — not in Windsor but in the town of Tecumseh they'll be taking on the services of policing — public housing, social assistance, public health inspection. They have no idea what the cost of those services is going to be, yet they're going to be expected to pay for them. At some point later on in 1998 they will be presented a bill to say, "This is how much we expect you to pay for these things."

Another part of Bill 164 is to introduce some tax credits. These are tax credits that were announced during the 1997 budget. I've been listening closely to the debate with respect to this bill and on other bills as well, and this government continues to say they don't think there should be public assistance for corporations in Ontario, no direct assistance anyway. They don't think there should be loan programs from the government to corporations, but they try to distinguish the tax credits they're providing for in Bill 164 from loan programs, for example.

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In my submission, there really isn't any distinction. This is a case where we really need to question who is going to benefit from these tax credits and who is going to pay. We've seen some examples of who is paying for the tax credits and the tax cuts of this government. Consistently, we're seeing it being paid for by the poor, we're seeing it being paid for by tenants, and soon we're going to see it being paid for by property taxpayers here, those who are in the least likely position to be able to shoulder the burden of those tax credits, those tax cuts. Those are the people who are consistently being faced with having to pay the price of those things.

Having said that, I want to indicate as a New Democrat that we're not really opposed to entering into partnerships with the private sector and giving assistance to private

sector employers if we know that's going to lead to long-term job creation. The problem with Bill 164 and the budget in 1997 is that there is really no projection with respect to job creation that may be expected as a result of these initiatives. How much revenue is going to be lost as a result of them is clearly set out, but we're not going to have any idea as to how many jobs are going to be created, if any, as a result of this tax credit scheme in Bill 164.

As I said, we agree that there are occasions when the government should be involved in the private sector to create jobs. I think that Windsor is a good example of an area where that was done. Right now, a recent report from the Windsor-Essex County Development Commission indicates that Windsor is rapidly becoming one of the highest-paying regions in the nation. Retail sales have increased by 12.2% since 1993. The city's bond rating has been upgraded five times, from BBB+ in 1992 to AA- in 1997.

I wanted to make the point that a lot of those things were happening long before this government ever came up with this tax credit scheme. This was the result of initiatives that were put in place by the NDP government at the time. They didn't need any tax credits. They needed some positive developments in the city of Windsor to cause this climate to happen, and they did.

One of the things that was done was the establishment of Casino Windsor in 1994. These are some of the building permits that have taken place as a result of the casino development: \$90 million for the 50,000-square-foot interim casino; \$50 million for the Northern Belle riverboat casino; \$550 million for the permanent casino. The casinos directly employ 3,817 people and have got a payroll and benefits that have exceeded \$325 million to date. They are the third-largest employer in the city of Windsor right now, behind Ford and Chrysler. I would suggest to the members opposite that these are the sorts of job creation initiatives where the job creation impacts can be measured.

We've seen the positive impact that has on our community. This wasn't something that came about as a result of tax cuts or tax credits or any Tory job creation initiatives that have been taken. These have been things that have been done in our community as a result of the cooperation and the participation of the former NDP government.

This government is consistent in saying that governments can't create jobs, that only the private sector can create jobs and that the only way they can create jobs is to reduce taxes; you've got to give people a big tax cut to create jobs. I just want to indicate some of the statistics from the Financial Post between 1988 and 1997. These are some of the job creation initiatives by some large corporations. We've seen General Motors decrease its workforce by 12,000; Imperial Oil decreased its workforce by 4,000; Inco decreased its workforce by 2,000; Molson, 6,000; Stelco, 4,000. Large corporate employers have been consistently reducing the number of employees they've had working for them, notwithstanding the

introduction of the free trade agreement which they said was going to permit them to create thousands of jobs in Canada and in Ontario. We haven't seen that.

We have a fear that the tax cut isn't going to lead to job creation to the magnitude that this government is saying it is and we're concerned that the tax credits that are part of Bill 164 aren't going to lead to the creation of the jobs this government says they will create.

We saw a few weeks ago that the teachers were involved in a political protest that really heightened the awareness of taxpayers in Ontario. People began to ask themselves why 126,000 mild-mannered, middle-income, mostly women teachers would leave their classrooms, risk breaking the law and leave their children to whom they've dedicated most of their lives in order to be engaged in a political protest against the government. They demonstrated to people what the cost of a tax cut really is going to be. They demonstrated to people that you can't promise to improve the quality of education and take out \$667 million at the same time. When people found that out, they realized that what this government was doing just didn't hold water. They finally realized that tax cuts come at a price, and it's usually higher than what Tory politicians tell you that cost will be.

They also demonstrated that tax cuts sound better than they really feel. I think they also demonstrated that tax cuts and tax credits aren't the way to create jobs in the province of Ontario. There's a high price to pay. I believe people in Ontario are finally starting to determine what that price is. It means lack of quality health care and a diminishing of educational opportunities for people in the province. They don't want to see that continue.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin):
Questions or comments?

Mr Tilson: I would like to comment on one area that was raised by the member for Windsor-Riverside, and that has to do with the allegations of censorship by the government with respect to tax notices. One of the problems, if he has any idea about assessment in this province, is comparing assessments around this province. If you think your taxes are too high in one area, you try and compare your taxes of your business or the house you live in to another, and it's almost impossible. Why? Because the assessment is a mess. One of the things this government is trying to do is to standardize the form of assessment.

What's wrong with that? What's wrong with trying to determine whether or not the assessment in one area is the same or similar to the assessment in another? If your taxes are too high, you should have the right to challenge that. That isn't censorship. That's a matter of fairness and enabling the public and the electorate to determine whether or not their taxes are appropriate.

These provisions are intended to ensure the consistency of tax billing methods in order to increase the transparency and understandability for taxpayers. Consistent tax bills would simplify the tax billing process, rather than having a myriad of tax bills as we do now around this province, and there would be a standardized format. Many

members of the opposition seem to be opposed to standardization. They don't like the word. I'm saying we're going to make the tax system fairer in this province.

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Mr Alex Cullen (Ottawa West): I'm pleased to rise to comment on the remarks by the member for Windsor-Riverside. I did hear him speak in terms of one aspect of the bill. The bill, in my view, is a tremendous example of Orwellian Newspeak, and that's an issue I'll come back to later on in terms of its claims for job creation. As he very nicely pointed out, the job losses that we've had in our economy — even though we have economic growth in Ontario, we are suffering from persistent high unemployment, and that's another theme I will return to as well in my remarks on this bill.

One of the comments that was made by the previous speaker deals with the so-called standardization of property tax bills. There is a complete red herring being created here. I don't know if you know the origin of the phrase "red herring." It comes from Holland, as a matter of fact. It speaks to the herring fleets that would go out looking for great schools of herring to harvest and bring back to their markets, and of course the notion was that if you found one with a red herring, there would be hundreds of thousands of herrings to be harvested. So you always sent the other fleets off to chase the mythical red herring and you would stay in the more bountiful shores and capture the true harvest from the sea. Sending someone off on a red herring chase meant you were leading them down the garden path.

In this particular instance, when we're dealing with property tax bills, every property tax bill across Ontario shows the assessed value of your home and the mill rate that's being applied. What is the province doing with all its property tax legislation? It's compounding, complexifying, making more complicated to understand, to read what assessment is, and then it's going to come in and say, "Never mind the mill rates," which of course the province will set for commercial and industrial for education. "We will tell you what you will see." That's what's wrong.

Mr Len Wood (Cochrane North): I want to congratulate the member for Windsor-Riverside on the comments he brought forward on Bill 164. It is quite obvious that there were a lot of mistakes made in Bill 149, and now they're trying to correct some of their mistakes by bringing in another bully bill, Bill 164.

If you look at the title of it, you would think it's going to be good for the people of Ontario. It talks about job creation and it talks about tax issues, but there's nothing good in the bill for the province. They don't even set targets for creating jobs and reducing unemployment in the province, which they should be doing, rather than bringing forward a bill in the last few days of the Legislature sitting for this fall that's going to muzzle the municipalities, that's going to restrict the municipalities on what they can put on a tax bill.

In northern Ontario there are a lot of municipalities that would like to include an item in the tax bill saying, "Your taxes are going up or your services are being reduced as a direct result of what Mike Harris is doing in the province

over the last two and a half years." I believe they should be able to put that in there. I know the mayor of Kapuskasing is very upset with Minister Al Leach trying to force amalgamation on to the area of 670. He has come out very clearly in the newspaper this week saying, "If the Conservative Party and the minister want their dirty work done, they can do the dirty work themselves rather than trying to force the municipalities to do it through the mayors and reeves." There are a lot of unhappy people out there.

I had heard earlier — I know the member for Windsor-Riverside would have included it in his comments — about a tax grab in northern Ontario as well, where they've put a tax on all the cars in northern Ontario, where nobody paid for their licence plates before and now all of a sudden there's a tax grab where everybody has to pay for their licence plates in northern Ontario.

Mr John L. Parker (York East): I'm pleased to have this opportunity to respond to the remarks by my friend from Windsor-Riverside. In doing so, I intend to support the observations made by my colleague from Dufferin-Peel.

I am intrigued that my friends opposite take such interest in section 9 of schedule F, the provision that provides for standardized reporting of municipal tax bills. I really do find it hard to understand why realistically our friends opposite would object to this provision. Their concerns are expressed in terms that I would suggest very effectively alarm the listener but do very little to inform the listener. There's nothing altogether new in this. We had this with Bill 160; we're having it again with Bill 164.

We are told that this provision is an example of censorship, that it will prevent municipalities from conveying information. No, that's not what this provision is about. This provision is about clarity, about providing clarity of the transmission of financial information, clarity of the transmission of tax information, to provide for reliability of information, for the understandability of the information, to make it consistent and comparable year by year and consistent and comparable community by community.

Taxpayers will understand the information that's in their tax bill. They will understand what is being conveyed by that information and they can compare this year's tax bill with last year's tax bill, and they can compare their tax bills with the tax bills for other communities. That is what this section in the bill provides for, consistency and clarity of information, so that the taxpayer can understand what's being told and can compare that information year by year and community by community.

I find it difficult to understand why anyone would seriously object to a provision like that. There is much in this bill to discuss. That is one provision that I would expect anyone realistically examining the merits of the matter would support. Why the opposition takes exception to it frankly is beyond me.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Windsor-Riverside, you have two minutes.

Mr Lessard: I want to thank the members for Dufferin-Peel, Ottawa West, Cochrane North and York

East for their comments with respect to my speech on Bill 164. The member for Dufferin-Peel talks about the uniform assessment, section 9, schedule F, of Bill 164. He says that this is to introduce consistency in providing taxation information to taxpayers, and it sounded a lot like the briefing note we've been hearing read over and over as a response to this section of the bill.

He mentioned that that's to give people an opportunity to compare their taxes one municipality to another, so that they would be able to be involved in appeals. I haven't heard anywhere during this debate how this government is going to deal with the thousands and thousands of appeals that property taxpayers are going to be bringing in in the next couple of years as a result of market value assessment and increases in their taxes. There's no plan for that; it's going to be complete chaos.

The member for Ottawa West really hit the nail on the head when he referred to the title of this bill and what's included in here as a version of Orwellian Newspeak. The member for Cochrane North mentioned as well that the title is misleading, and the member for Ottawa West gave us a very enlightening discussion about red herrings. This government has become expert in trying to get people to pursue red herrings and get their eye off the bigger picture, which is the coming increase in property taxes to property taxpayers here in the province. When you talk about clarity, that's something the taxpayers are going to understand.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate? The member for Dufferin-Peel.

Mr Tilson: I would like to say a few words with respect to Bill 164, the short title of which is the Tax Credits to Create Jobs Act, 1997. This bill does implement a number of provisions of the 1997 budget which was presented by the finance minister earlier in the year.

We have known, of course, the state of the economy of the province and where it has gone in the last decade. We have been worried about the debt. We have been worried about the unemployment. We have been worried about bankruptcies. We have been worried about welfare. We've been worried about all kinds of things which we feel have resulted in the lack of jobs in this province.

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Of course, one tries to determine how you can encourage new businesses to start in this province. How can you encourage investment from other provinces, investment from other countries to come into our province, to return to our province, to create the jobs we once had? I submit to you that this is one of the reasons for this bill and for the 1997 budget, the provisions that were introduced by Minister Eves.

We believe that in just over two years we've turned the economy around in this province, that the financial position of this province has turned around and has improved tremendously.

Interjections.

Mr Tilson: The members of the NDP in particular are laughing at that of course. I'd like to remind them exactly who put this province in debt. It was they. They are the

ones who decided the only way to get out of the recession was to spend their way out of the recession. Of course, they created all kinds of jobs through the civil service, through public enterprise, as opposed to private enterprise. We discovered that that didn't work. Why didn't it work? Because we can't afford it, we don't have the money.

In 1995 we were spending over \$11 billion more a year than we were taking in. That's \$1.2 million an hour more than we were taking in. That system that was used by the former government, and to a certain extent by my friends in the Liberal caucus, didn't work. We discovered it didn't work. So that is the whole philosophy of how we create jobs, how we improve the economy in this province.

I would like to summarize the budget items that have been referred to with respect to this specific bill, Bill 164. The bill introduces measures to support youth employment and small business job creation, to improve the access to capital for small business, to promote cultural industries, to foster research and development innovation, to introduce a child care tax credit, to simplify and modernize Ontario's capital tax system for financial institutions and to establish a not-for-profit corporation to deliver property assessment services.

I appreciate that the last one is the one that provokes particularly my friends in the New Democratic caucus more than any other, and I understand that, because I understand what their philosophy is. It's the opposite of ours. It's exactly the opposite of ours. We tried your system and it didn't work. That's why we believe this is the system —

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): That's why your system is not working.

The Acting Speaker: The member for London —

Mr Tilson: This is the system, as you'll notice, where the creation of jobs in this province is on the increase.

The other issue of course was the amount of regulation and rules that started to pile up in this province. The red tape bills that we've put forward have tried to eliminate a number of those issues and to make it simpler and easier to create jobs in this province, to create industry in this province and to create a bustling economy that we once had.

It can't work with the overburdened regulation and rules and taxes that we have. Why? Because people weren't investing in this province. Why weren't they investing in this province? They weren't investing in this province because of the terrible labour laws that we had, because of the regulations that we had and because of the high taxes that we had. This bill creates approximately 30 tax credits to encourage businesses to create jobs for this province.

I will say that this year, the \$11.2-billion deficit that we inherited will be something less than \$7 billion. If you don't stop spending more than what's coming in, eventually you're going to go broke. If you don't stop doing that, you're going to go broke. That's what we're trying to do. My friends over here in the Liberal and New Democratic caucuses will say: "Don't give tax credits. Don't cut taxes. Spend."

Interjection.

Mr Tilson: My friend from Ottawa's cousins in Ottawa are doing just that. We on this side of the House are trying to encourage your Liberal cousins to make tax cuts and not spend, spend, spend.

By continuing to be vigilant and to find new ways of doing more for less, we believe we're on track to balance Ontario's budget by the year 2000, just like we said we would do.

We have cut taxes 30 times in less than two years. This includes the first three instalments of our income tax rate to promote confidence and stimulate spending. We cut the employer health tax and eliminated it completely for small business. We've introduced initiatives to help small businesses get access to the capital they need to succeed and create jobs. We're weeding out unnecessary rules and regulations through the Red Tape Commission. Workers' compensation premiums have been cut by 5%. We're restoring balance to the province's labour legislation.

The purpose of this bill, I repeat, is to encourage jobs, to stimulate youth employment and to stimulate small business job creation.

I would like to be a little bit more specific on some of the provisions of the bill that I summarized at the outset of my comments. One of them, of course, is the enhancements to the Ontario book publishing tax credit. This was announced in the 1997 budget, that the Ontario book publishing companies are eligible for a refundable tax credit at a rate of 30% on pre-production and promotional costs —

Mr Cullen: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I know this is an important bill for the government, but we lack a quorum.

The Acting Speaker: Would you please check if we have a quorum.

Clerk at the Table (Mr Todd Decker): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk at the Table: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Dufferin-Peel.

Mr Tilson: I was commenting on the enhancements to the Ontario book publishing business. I'm sure all members on all sides will agree that we should be encouraging Canadian publishing in this province and in this country. That's one of the items, of course, that Bill 164 is doing.

As I indicated, in the 1997 budget the Ontario book publishing companies are eligible for a refundable tax credit at a rate of 30% on pre-production and promotional costs and 15% on production costs for publishing the works of first-time Canadian authors.

We have a lot of talent in this province. We have a lot of talent in our schools, young people who are coming forward who are writing amazing things. We as legislators, without writing cheques and giving grants like we have in the past — we can't afford to do that — should be encouraging businesses to develop the Canadian talent

we have. It's through the tax credit that we believe this will assist those people.

Following the consultations with the industry stakeholders, the eligibility has been expanded to include the following: children's books by first-time illustrators; educational titles; qualifying expenditures will include one half of meals and entertainment expenses of the author while on a promotional tour; and the publishing costs for books unpublished as of May 6, 1997.

1640

It's really difficult to be a writer today. The competition is unbelievable, not just from within the province but outside the province. The cost it takes to promote one's book through the publishing business is rather unbelievable. I believe this tax credit will assist the publishing business and, in turn, assist the work of the authors of this great province.

Another item that the bill is going to put forward is the enhancements to the Ontario film and television tax credit. The budget, and indeed Bill 164, enhance the Ontario film and television tax credit by increasing the tax credit rate to 20% from 15% on qualifying labour expenditures after May 6, 1997, and by raising the annual corporate tax credit limit to \$3 million from \$2 million. This was to help ensure that Ontario continues to be a leading film and television production centre in North America. Ontario will be introducing legislation to expand the eligible genres under the Ontario film and television tax credit and to remove the per project and annual corporate tax credit limits for productions commencing after October 31, 1997.

You will notice that what our government is doing is different from the other governments we've had in the last decade. The governments in the last decade used to love to write cheques. They wrote cheques for everything, they gave grants to everything, things we simply can't afford. I think the government has an obligation to assist certain industries, certain aspects of the economy, and I've listed two of them: the publishing business and the Ontario film and television industry. But the governments in the past would write cheques. They would simply give grants. That, I submit to you, Mr Speaker, is not the way to encourage those industries to flourish in this province. The way to encourage those types of industries to flourish is through the tax credit system. It is that system that we are endeavouring to follow.

In the former system, of course, you wrote cheques for everything. The former Liberal and NDP governments loved to do that, and that's why the debt increased the way it did; that's why we were spending more than was coming in. We're going to stop that and try to encourage industries to develop on their own, with a real sense of economy.

Another area Bill 164 is promoting is the Ontario computer animation and special effects tax credit. The 1997 budget introduced the Ontario computer animation and special effects tax credit for digital animation and digital visual effects produced in Ontario for use in films or television productions. This, we believe, will encourage

companies to expand and create jobs in this growing and dynamic segment of the film and television production industry. This tax rate will be increased to 20% from 15% effective July 1, 1997. That was in the budget, so I'm not telling you anything that's new. This piece of legislation implements what was introduced by Minister Eves. Again, we're implementing the tax credit as opposed to simply writing a cheque to these industries.

My final comments are going to be on a topic that I know — I have time to comment with respect to the child care tax credit. I think that is something we need to — I can't believe all sides of this House don't support that provision. The Minister of Finance announced the introduction of the Ontario child tax credit to begin in the 1997 taxation year. This tax credit is a new investment of \$40 million in working Ontario families and children. As I say, I expect all sides of the House will support that credit.

The tax credit will assist working families who are not benefiting from current child care funding. There are about 90,000 families and 125,000 children who are expected to benefit from this child care tax credit. Child care expenses incurred to enable parents to work or to attend school full-time will be eligible for the new credit.

That is another area in which we are encouraging people to work, in which we are encouraging people to become better educated and to qualify for higher-paying jobs. The child care tax credit enables mothers and fathers to become better educated, to work and hence improve not only their own lives, but the economy of this province.

One area that I know provokes particularly my friends in the New Democratic caucus the most is the Ontario Property Assessment Corp. They keep seeming to suggest that this corporation is being run by the province of Ontario. If you look at the provisions, there will be 14 members on the board, all of whom will be municipal people: All but two will be recommended by AMO, six will be elected, six will be non-elected and all of those will be put forward at the recommendation of the Association of Municipalities of Ontario.

In the 1997 budget the Minister of Finance confirmed the government's commitment to introduce legislation to establish an efficient and effective assessment function at the municipal level and to work with municipalities to ensure the smooth transfer of assessment service delivery.

I think one of the problems we've had in this province, as I indicated in my response to the presentation made by the member for Windsor-Riverside, was to develop a standardization of assessment across this province. It's been a mess. People haven't been able to determine whether their taxes are fair in this province, whether they're paying the same in similar circumstances and in similar situations, whether it be residential or business taxes, in one part of the province as in another.

This bill proposes a statutory not-for-profit corporation to deliver assessment services. All municipalities in this province would be members of the corporation. The bill proposes that the corporation would have a board of directors, as I indicated, composed of six elected and six non-elected municipal employees or officers, and two

members designated by the Minister of Finance to represent other stakeholders. This bill proposes that the distribution of assessment services costs among municipalities should recognize both municipal demands for services and the municipality's ability to pay.

The thrust of this particular provision of the bill is to develop a standardization of assessment around the province. It is not standard at this point in time and that is one of the reasons why the confusion that exists with respect to municipal taxes around this province exists today.

Why, for the life of me, the members of the opposition would contest this particular provision when it's going to assist members of the public to determine whether their taxes are fair, I don't understand. I don't understand why they don't want to create a fair and equal tax system across this province.

1650

I would submit to you that this corporation, which is a non-profit, not-for-profit corporation and will be controlled by municipalities, is going to provide the assessment that the province requires and needs to make it a fairer system in this province.

The bill proposes that the Ministry of Finance would continue to provide assessment services on behalf of the corporation until the corporation is ready to assume the management of assessment functions —

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. Time has expired. Questions or comments?

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I found the member's speech very interesting. I was concerned that he didn't have sufficient time to mention the fact that his Premier, Mike Harris, is censoring municipalities. I don't think he had the chance, because now that we're down to 20 minutes per speech under the new Mike Harris rules in the House, the member did not have the opportunity, I'm sure, to deal with the fact that municipalities are being censored.

I know many of us who have served on municipal council, and I would say Hazel McCallion is probably among those people, would be perturbed that the provincial government would stipulate that municipalities couldn't include on the tax bill itself certain information about why there might be an increase in municipal property taxes. Many of them have complained to me about this.

I've also heard from the clerks and treasurers of Ontario, who say there's going to be chaos ensuing after this bill passes, as apparently it's going to, because now I see that the government is bringing in a time allocation motion. The member probably wasn't aware of that. Yet another closure motion to close off, to choke off debate has been filed by the government on this important bill. So not only is the government censoring the municipalities —

Interjection.

Mr Bradley: — and I know my friend from Mississauga South will be hearing from Hazel McCallion when she finds out that she is being censored.

I just wanted to help the member out, because Mr Tilson, I know, if he had the full 30 minutes that used to be available, would have mentioned his concern about the fact that his Premier, Mike Harris, is censoring municipalities, not allowing them to give information on the tax bill.

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): I listened carefully to all of the member for Dufferin-Peel's comments. What I'm concerned about is that in around 30 minutes, I'm going to be speaking to the bill and I'm worried that we've lost our audience. In approximately 30 minutes I'm going to have a chance — not a whole lot of time, but a brief opportunity — to speak to Bill 164.

Down in Niagara there's a snowstorm right now and a whole lot of people have gone home early from work to avoid the problems associated with unplowed streets, because that's part of the phenomenon of this government. If you think for even the briefest moments that it's just a matter of convenience, think again. That's a real safety issue in communities. It certainly is down in Welland-Thorold and across Niagara region.

One of the interesting things about this bill that I'm going to feel free to comment on at length is its title. They have more nerve than Dick Tracy, quite frankly, to entitle this An Act to implement job creation. Job creation, my foot. This government has failed miserably in even coming close to meeting its promise. Remember it was a promise of 725,000 new jobs, and people in Ontario thought they meant real jobs, not the part-time, temporary, minimum wage jobs or, as is increasingly the case, subminimum wage jobs, McJobs, jobettes, call them what you will.

The fact is that bankruptcies among small businesses are just skyrocketing through the roof under this government's policies. The fact is that wages are dropping. The fact is that unemployment remains stuck down in Niagara region at the double-digit level, and among youngsters, double that, twice that of their parents. There is nothing about which this government could be proud.

Hon Margaret Marland (Minister without Portfolio [children's issues]): I would like to just assure the member for St Catharines that Mayor McCallion doesn't need his help lobbying in this House. She has four very committed members for her city who do a very proficient job at looking after the interests of Mississauga. It may well be that they can't on their printed bill define those areas that are not their direct responsibility in terms of the cost of that bill, but they can very easily enclose any further information that they wish in the envelopes, and the member for St Catharines knows that very well.

The point that I really want to make about this bill is the very fact that it's called the Tax Credits to Create Jobs Act is something that we should all be standing up in this House cheering about. If you look at some of those tax credits and know what they involve — and I give you as an example the Ontario film and television tax credit. It is fantastic what is going on in Ontario in terms of Ontario film production. Both the previous governments supported the Ontario Film Development Corp with tax money to promote that industry and the result is that it is a booming

industry creating all kinds of jobs in this province, all in the private sector.

Second, the Ontario computer animation and special effects tax credit: The leading program in North America is at Sheridan College, Oakville, in computer animation and special effects. The people who graduate from that course at Sheridan College get an instant job and in all the leading —

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. The member for Kingston and The Islands.

Mr Gerretsen: All I can say is they've done it once again. A time allocation motion has been filed that, after today, the next time the bill gets called it's up for third reading. This is the 16th time within the last six months that this bullying government is once again resorting to closure. This is all this is, it's closure, so that the elected representatives of the people of Ontario can no longer speak on very important legislation.

What's interesting is that you've done it on just about every piece of important legislation. You don't want to debate it, which begs the question — we had a budget when? In May of this year. This bill is intended to implement some of the items that are called for in the budget in May of this year, some seven or eight months ago. Why did the government only introduce this Bill 164 less than a week ago? Why did they wait for six months to introduce that? They are incompetent, and once they realize they are incompetent and try to do something about it, then they try to bully their way through by having another closure motion.

The member for Dufferin-Peel talked about tax credits. How can you give tax cuts to people when you are still going into debt by a further \$20 billion during your term of office? How can you possibly do that? When we in the province of Ontario are paying \$9.1 billion, almost 20% of the budget on interest costs, how can you possibly justify that? You can't. Your government is bullying and is doing so once again with another closure motion. This is holding Parliament in contempt as far as I am concerned.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Dufferin-Peel, you have two minutes.

Mr Tilson: Thank you for the comments, the member for Kingston and The Islands, the minister responsible for children's issues, the member for Welland-Thorold and, of course, the member for St Catharines, with respect to their response to the presentation I made.

The member for Welland-Thorold doesn't even like the title of the bill, which is called the Tax Credits to Create Jobs Act. What's wrong with trying to do whatever we can to create jobs? What's wrong with that?

Mr Gerretsen: Nothing.

Mr Tilson: The member says, "Nothing," but that's what the bill is trying to do. What's wrong with trying to create as many jobs as possible in this province? The member for Kingston and The Islands will say, "Nothing." Then I hope he supports the bill because that's exactly what this bill is trying to do. This bill is trying to encourage the support of as many jobs as possible in this province as we can to make it the prosperous place that it

once was. We're trying to help to keep Ontario competitive and to help business grow in this province so that investment will come from other provinces, from other countries, to encourage jobs and to create well-being for all of us in this province. We haven't exactly had that in the last decade. We believe that the policies that are being put forward by Minister Eves, the finance minister, which are set forth in this bill will do just that. I congratulate the finance minister for bringing forward this bill as a result of the budget that was introduced in May. Of course that is exactly what this bill is doing; it is going to improve the economy and the wellbeing of this province.

1700

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Cullen: I am pleased to rise to join the debate on Bill 164. This is a bill that's really an omnibus bill. It has seven schedules, five of which deal with tax credit measures. A further schedule amends some 13 acts and the final schedule deals with the whole business of the downloading of property assessment to the municipalities.

Quite frankly, I am getting sick and tired of the Orwellian Newspeak that I keep encountering time and time again with this government. You may recall that George Orwell wrote a seminal book called 1984, where he talked about the power of Big Brother government, and it's amazing to hear this in the context of this government, which has sought to centralize so much power within cabinet in an absolutely unaccountable way, in a way that is counter to transparency, counter to public debate and counter to public scrutiny. In fact it is even underscored today with the introduction of the time allocation motion.

Of course in 1984, Newspeak became famous. The Ministry of Peace waged war, etc, and I'm so reminded because as I read the title of this bill, An Act to implement job creation measures and other measures contained in the 1997 Budget and to make other amendments to statutes administered by the Ministry of Finance or relating to taxation matters, we find this 199-page bill covering so much more territory than that. I'm reminded of Bill 26, An Act to achieve Fiscal Savings and promote Economic Prosperity through Public Sector Restructuring, Streamlining and Efficiency and to implement other aspects of the Government's Economic Agenda. That was really the bully bill, the municipal destruction bill.

Then we look at Bill 96, An Act to Consolidate and Revise the Law with respect to Residential Tenancies, otherwise known as the Tenant Protection Act, which took away rent control from tenants across Ontario. Then we look at Bill 136, An Act to provide for the expeditious resolution of disputes during collective bargaining in certain sectors and to facilitate collective bargaining following restructuring in the public sector and to make certain amendments to the Employment Standards Act and the Pay Equity Act, an act that sought to destroy collective bargaining here in Ontario.

Then we look at, of course, the famous Bill 152, An Act to improve Services, increase Efficiency and benefit Taxpayers by eliminating Duplication and reallocating

Responsibilities between Provincial and Municipal Governments in various areas and to implement other aspects of the Government's "Who Does What" Agenda, the provincial downloading bill which is going to raise property taxes across Ontario.

Then, of course, the famous Bill 160, An Act to reform the education system, protect classroom funding, and enhance accountability — not — and make other improvements consistent with the Government's education quality agenda, including improved student achievement and regulated class size, has zip-all to do with student achievement. I could go on.

Unfortunately, Bill 164 is simply another example of the Newspeak that this government so delights in. Quite frankly, the act supposedly implements measures contained in the 1997 budget. As the member for Kingston and The Islands has so eloquently said, "It seeks to implement that budget that was tabled in this House in May." Well, this act was introduced on November 25, 1997, six months later, and what is going to happen?

We are going to have this become law before December 18. In less than a month, this act, which not only deals with tax credits, but has the omnibus factor of dealing with some 13 other pieces of legislation as well as the downloading of assessment on to municipalities, is going to be passed with no public hearings whatsoever, with debate being shut down, closed down yet again.

It is true that efficient government and democracy are antithetical. Efficient government doesn't like debate, doesn't like people questioning or commenting on the government's agenda. The government itself does not like democracy, where it is forced to uphold its agenda and, lo and behold, find out what people think about it, what people think is wrong with it, what needs improvement. Good government requires that; efficient government finds democracy troublesome. All I can say is that you reap what you sow.

What is in this bill? Why, by gum, there are amendments here that seek to improve Bill 149 that was passed — how long ago was Bill 149 passed? Was it just a matter of days ago? Bill 160 — how long ago was Bill 160 passed? Was it just days ago? For heaven's sake, did we have proper hearings for these bills? How many people wanted to speak on Bill 160, a seminal change to our education system? Some 1,200 and some-odd. How many people eventually did get to speak to this major piece of legislation changing one of the major responsibilities shared with taxpayers and parents and teachers across Ontario? Was it 80? Was it even 80? Here, with this bill, no public hearings.

As I said earlier, this bill seeks to implement the May 1997 budget. It introduces seven new tax credits in an attempt to create jobs. We all remember the Common Sense Revolution and its commitment to create jobs. Let me just quote from this particular budget.

It says here, "We have cut government spending in a deliberate and careful way, because government was too big, too wasteful and was doing too many other things...." I'm sorry, what it has done is remove services, services

that taxpayers wanted and needed. For those members who were here in the House when I raised my question about the community care access centre, here is a service that this government promised to maintain, the quality of health care services in Ontario, yet it is not providing the funding in the name of deficit reduction.

It says here, "We are reducing the size of governments in this province, peeling away the layers of red tape and bureaucracy." What is happening instead, we just have to look at the environmental sector to see the loss of public sector jobs that were there to enforce the will of the people of Ontario to ensure that we had a safe environment.

"We are redefining the role of governments in Ontario to make them more accountable to taxpayers." Again another example of Newspeak, because government, particularly this government, is becoming less and less accountable with its penchant for more and more regulation that's coming from the cabinet or the minister involved.

This particular piece of legislation seeks to implement job creation measures in an effort to follow up on the Ontario budget. So where are we in terms of the impact of this government's economic agenda since it took office in 1995? Have we had growth in the economy? My colleagues opposite will say that we've had record growth in this economy and they will claim credit to their own economic policies. But a careful scrutiny of the facts will show you that economic growth in this province has been led by the US economy; it's been an export-led recovery. As a matter of fact, when you compare it to the absolutely scandalous level of unemployment here in Ontario, this government should be very concerned.

Indeed, when we look at the government's predictions, as a result of its budget, for unemployment in this province, we find that the government expected it to reach lower than 9%, a range of 8.4% to 8.7% unemployment for this year here in Ontario. What do we have? Well beyond that. We find unemployment persistently stuck at around 9%; as a matter of fact, 502,000 people, more people unemployed in Ontario than even when Mike Harris took office. When Mike Harris took office the number of unemployed in this province was less. What do we have today? Still a record level of unemployment for Ontario, more people unemployed than ever before.

The Common Sense Revolution, that this legislation, among others, is seeking to implement, promised that at the end of the term of this government, this government will have created over 725,000 jobs. It is failing. To date it has achieved less than two thirds of that objective. All the reputable economists floating around — I could point to the Royal Bank and to many other economic forecasters — are saying there is no way this government's going to achieve anywhere near close to its objective and it should therefore be concerned.

1710

I heard one of my colleagues, a member opposite, talk earlier about the situation in Ottawa-Carleton and about the 5,000 jobs that were coming at Nortel, the 3,100 jobs that were coming at Newbridge: excellent examples of

something that's happening as a result of trade and expansion happening offshore, in the United States and elsewhere.

But what is the employment situation in Ottawa-Carleton? Do we find as a result of these new jobs that the unemployment rate in Ottawa-Carleton is going down? Indeed not. We find still a record level of unemployment in Ottawa-Carleton, still matching or exceeding the unemployment rate for Ontario, something unheard of prior to this government's election, as a matter of fact, a short two years ago, still sitting at around 9%.

We find today, as a matter of fact with this government's economic policies, that youth unemployment is still at record levels, more than double, almost triple, the level of unemployment for the regular-base adult population in Ontario, over 17%; over 144,000 young people unemployed in this province and yet all the government can come up with is tax credits which for existing companies they will piggyback on, they will use. It won't create a new job for them, but yet they're still trying to achieve job creation. They are going to fail because they cannot match their promises.

What we find here in Ontario is that poverty has increased; child poverty has increased. Over 500,000 children are living in poverty, a direct result of this government's ill-thought-out, ill-considered economic agenda. Why is it that today this government still maintains the same credit rating as the previous government it seeks so much to denigrate? Why does it have the same bond rating? Because the bond raters on Bay Street know that you can't suck and blow at the same time, that you can't work on trying to achieve a balanced budget and at the same time cut income taxes. As a matter of fact, by the time we hit July of this year we'll have cut incomes in Ontario by some 22%, and where are the jobs? The jobs are not there. This piece of legislation is a sorry attempt to try and put it in place, to try and hustle this stuff through, and at the same time, as a Trojan horse, try to cover off other elements of the government's agenda.

This brings me to the other aspect of this bill. We can talk about tax credits, how useful tax credits are in trying to achieve the government's agenda, but I think I've quite simply proved that the government is failing in its job creation agenda. Even with this legislation that it's trying to hustle through six months after the budget, one month after tabling it, trying to bring job allocation, it is simply an effort to try and make up for lost time and will fall flat on its face because what we need in this province is job creation efforts and jobs, and we need educational programs that will meet the needs of our young.

What is happening with this government under Bill 160, as a sidebar? Bill 160 takes money out of education, takes teachers out of education and is going to reduce the quality of education across Ontario at the very time when youth unemployment is at record levels, where we have such scandalous numbers of children in poverty needing the break to get ahead and over 144,000 youth trying to find a job. There aren't jobs out there. What the government will point to is workfare programs, and yet

what are workfare programs going to do? Is that going to create jobs? Is that going to find meaningful employment for these people? Not at all. Not even close.

One of the issues in this bill deals with property assessment, and in dealing with property assessment this bill establishes the Ontario Property Assessment Corp, a means by which it will devolve or offload the \$120 million worth of cost on to municipalities so they can manage the province's responsibility. What is the province doing? It is changing assessment across Ontario. It is complicating assessment across Ontario. There will be appeals against this kind of assessment all over the place. So what does the government do? It offloads management, not policy. It says the municipalities will run this corporation. Well, fine. It will only mean that the municipalities will execute the Minister of Finance's regulations that deal with tax ratios, that deal with tax bands, that deal with property tax assessment, that deal with classes and subclasses.

What this government is doing in the guise of trying to standardize assessment across Ontario is creating such a massive, complicated system that as people try to understand this system and therefore try to recognize what's happening to their neighbour across the way, they will not get that information from the property tax bill, because the government of Ontario is going to make sure that only what it deems appropriate will be in that property tax bill going across Ontario.

I'm absolutely amazed. I sat on my municipal council for three years, my regional council for six years, my school board for six years, and I had a hand in setting the mill rate during that time. Quite frankly, it's a record of achievement that I was re-elected time and again in my own municipality.

I have to say to you, you look at that property tax bill. What does it say? It says, "Here is your home and it's assessed at so much, and here is the mill rate that's applied at your assessed value, and here's what you owe, and this is what you have to pay by this deadline, that deadline and the other deadline." Every property tax bill across Ontario says that. My friends opposite have the gall to stand up and say, "We're going to provide for a standardized means of providing this information and it's going to be better for everybody."

Why is the opposition so caught up on this issue? It's very transparent, because the bill that the municipalities were sending to their taxpayers showed the assessment, the mill rate and what you owed by what date. My friends opposite will now say it has to meet what the minister will set down in regulation what they say goes out, and so the ability for someone to cross-compare is going to be at the behest of the Minister of Finance.

Why do you take this away? Quite frankly, because there's a huge agenda going on. I mentioned earlier Bill 152, Bill 149, all these changes to assessment, provincial downloading, the shell game that's going on with property taxes. As much as my colleagues opposite will say, "Bill 152 won't cost property taxpayers more across Ontario," we know full well that with the game that's going on with reassessment, there will be winners and losers and all the

transition funds they may have in place won't pay for those shifts in assessment going across Ontario.

But they're going to point their finger to, "Who levies property tax? The municipality," and the municipalities want to make very clear what they are responsible for. Yet, here we hear the Treasurer of Ontario saying that this budget and this legislation are going to promote accountability. We hear them using Orwellian Newspeak. "More accountability" means less accountability. Why? Because it will be the minister and cabinet setting these rates, because it will be the minister and cabinet telling you what class you're in and what the tax bands are, and it'll be the minister and cabinet that'll be saying, "What's on that property tax bill?"

I can tell you, my friends, that when the phone calls come in and the municipalities are saying, "All these things are happening; all we want to do is be able to tell you what we are accountable for," they will not be able to do that on the municipal property tax bill.

It is an absolute contradiction of the principles of accountability, transparency, accessibility. But I forgot; these are small-l liberal-democratic principles for good government, but they impede the effectiveness, the efficiency of Big Brother government, of which this government is the proud master.

I cannot understand. I actually have a copy of the Common Sense Revolution where the Mike Harris Progressive Conservative Party stood up and said, "We're going to take government out of your face; we're going to reduce government." What they do instead with this Orwellian piece of legislation is they take more power back, remove accountability by virtue of this act, Mr Speaker, and I know that you will be offended by this. By virtue of this act, other pieces of legislation will be amended by regulation. Didn't we just see this in Bill 160? Again, it's here. This government doesn't learn. This government remains insistent.

1720

Earlier the member for Kingston and The Islands quoted from the Association of Municipal Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario. I sat on regional council. I sat on city council. I went out to other municipalities, and I have to tell you that our municipal civil service is among the finest in Canada. They serve the public. They are a phone call away, not only from their elected representative but also from their taxpayers. You can't say that here. You can't say that the Ministry of Finance is a phone call away from their elected representatives; you can't say that the Ministry of Finance is a phone call away from taxpayers. That's simply not so.

What did they say? They said that the cumulative effect of Bills 106, 149, 160 and now Bill 164 is that we no longer have a municipal property tax system. We have a provincial tax system administered by municipalities. The province controls the education tax, determines classes and subclasses of land, allocates tax ratios, transition ratios, and now it may determine what goes on —

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): The member's time has expired. Questions and comments?

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I would like to congratulate the member for Ottawa West on his presentation about the taxation measures in this bill and the concentration of power within the hands of the Minister of Finance. It seems to me that this government is attempting, through omnibus legislation, to bring in massive change that concentrates power in the hands of the government while at the same time avoiding having to deal with the House in a manner that is according to the rules and understood by everyone, by amending pieces of legislation that had not even been passed in the House. It's most unfortunate. I wish the government wouldn't act this way, and I agree completely with the comments of my friend from Ottawa West.

Mr Baird: I listened with great interest to my colleague the member for Ottawa West giving his remarks. It's funny, he spoke a lot about property assessment and devolving to the municipalities. I'm afraid in 1990 the last Liberal Minister of Revenue, Remo Mancini, put forward a piece of legislation to do just that, but again the Liberal Party changed their minds. I look opposite and I see a good number of New Democrats here, people who have one position. Take it or leave it, that's their position. They stand firm on their values and principles, and you've got to respect them for that. You can disagree, but they're honest and they have one opinion.

Hon Mrs Marland: They don't flip-flop.

Mr Baird: They don't flip-flop, the member for Mississauga South says.

I look at the Liberal Party, hearing the remarks of my colleague from Ottawa West. They're against tax cuts. They promised \$2 billion in tax cuts in the last election, and now they're all of a sudden against tax cuts. If the Liberal Party were ever again to come into government, they would turn back the clock. The leader of the Liberal Party, Dalton Turn-the-Clock-Back McGuinty, would obviously want to raise income taxes to get all that new money for the new spending, because they're against tax cuts. They want to turn the clock back there. They want to turn the clock back on research and development tax credits. They want to turn the clock back on small businesses.

The whiz kids in Dalton McGuinty's office, the PR and media flaks, Matt Maychak, want to turn back the clock. They have shut out the caucus and they're running everything from Dalton McGuinty's office, and that is just unbelievable. They want to turn back the clock on young people and graduates and co-op tax credits. They want to turn back the clock on welfare reform. They want to turn back the clock and give a 20% increase in the welfare benefit rate. They want to turn the clock because they oppose workfare. They want to turn back the clock because they want to restore quotas in Ontario. They want to turn back the clock because there isn't one single spending reduction in Ontario that the folks in the Ontario Liberal Party have agreed with, not one.

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough North): I listened very carefully to the member for Ottawa West, how eloquent and informative he was about the facts that he

put forward. Again, the problem, though, with this government — I don't know if they are listening, but I would suggest to them that they go back to Hansard and carefully observe what he has said. With the kind of experience he has and because he is offering this advice to the government, I think it's prudent for you to do so.

We know that with some of the things this government is doing — understanding that they are going to privatize the savings office — it's like they have gone wild with this privatization, and people are completely upset about that. But will they listen? We just hope they will do something about that and not run in the direction of trying to privatize all the savings offices around.

The fact is that on the downloading aspects of things, they have not even organized themselves. While the municipalities have complained about the process, again they did not listen. I urge you to examine the things the member has said. I want to commend him very well for bringing that kind of experience to the House so that we can continue to follow those procedures. But we hope this government will listen accordingly.

Ms Lankin: I'm glad to have an opportunity to comment on the remarks by the member for Ottawa West. I agree with the points he has put across. I think it is a real shame that with a bill like this — many of these initiatives were announced in the budget — we don't see it introduced in the House until the very last minute and there's no opportunity for appropriate debate or reflection and, more importantly, for some committee time for amendments. I think there is some merit to this bill. I would really like to discuss the possibility of amendments.

However, the government has moved a time allocation motion. We can see, once again, they're going to ram this through. I think it's unfortunate. The remarks of the member for Ottawa West, the many points he brought up, need to be addressed. There are points I would like to address. But yet again we see a government that isn't listening.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Ottawa West has two minutes to respond.

Mr Cullen: I appreciate the comments that have been made in this House with respect to my presentation. I apparently touched a nerve on the government side with respect to the whole issue of assessment. It is amazing, because all of us around this chamber know that assessment has to be reformed in this province. But it does not excuse the government from the kind of mistakes it's going to be making with, as the Association of Municipal Clerks and Treasurers has said, Bill 106, Bill 149, Bill 160, and now Bill 164.

What is happening here is that the whole issue of property assessment has been compounded. The government is going to bear the brunt for this. It cannot turn around and point fingers elsewhere. The government of the day should bring in legislation that is balanced and should provide for hearings so that people can perfect that legislation. It's a shame in this particular instance: no public hearings and time allocation motion yet again. It is

wrong; it is bad government; it's politics and it's certainly bad for democracy.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Kormos: I hope you understand how frustrating this is. This government changes the rules so that here we've got a bill 199 pages long dealing with dozens of pieces of existing legislation, impacting on a number of facets of life here in the province of Ontario, and I'm denied the opportunity to address it in any meaningful way, given a mere 10 minutes to speak to yet another omnibus bill.

You recall Bill 26. You recall how the repercussions of Bill 26 are still impacting on us. It's not an enviable position to be in, to feel compelled to speak on behalf of one's constituents, yet to find oneself virtually censored by this government because its rule changes prohibit, deny members the right to participate meaningfully in debate.

Add to that the admitted and clear position of the government that it isn't even going to contemplate public hearings on so extensive a piece of legislation as Bill 164. Add to that the bill introduced as recently as November 25, 1997, and already in but the first week and a half of December we've got a time allocation motion, a time allocation motion that is going to effectively kill debate. Even the modest 10 minutes allotted to members — because of this government's abuse of its majority in terms of the rules it created that are designed to silence members of the Legislative Assembly, time allocation motion once again.

There's been hardly a bill that hasn't been forced into third reading by way of time allocation. The government should have learned by now that time allocation motions carry with them the sort of disastrous haste it's been engaging in that result in mistake after mistake after mistake after mistake. Speakers have already commented on how this Bill 164, before Bill 149 is even enacted into law, is already trying to do cleanup on Bill 149. Do we have to go all the way back to Cafon Court or can we just talk about Bill 142? Can we talk about Bill 142 and the errors that were made there?

Mr Wildman: It's a comedy of errors.

Mr Kormos: It's not a comedy. My friend from Algoma speaks of comedy. This is the darkest of humour. I'm afraid a whole lot of Ontarians — one's hard-pressed to find one who would think this is at all funny. They're witnessing a trampling of a democratic process that has taken literally centuries to evolve, and one that Ontarians and Canadians hold and regard, in contrast to this government and its backbenchers marching in lockstep.

You know, Speaker, that's it. The time allocation motion is there. With the brevity of the time allowed, we might as well all go home. I'm the last speaker on this matter for the opposition.

The Acting Speaker: Comments and questions? Further debate?

Mr Eves has moved second reading of Bill 164. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Interjections.

Call in the members. There will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1732 to 1802.

The Acting Speaker: Those in favour of the motion will please rise one at a time.

Ayes

Amott, Ted	Hastings, John	Rollins, E.J. Douglas
Baird, John R.	Hudak, Tim	Ross, Lillian
Barrett, Toby	Jackson, Cameron	Runciman, Robert W.
Beaubien, Marcel	Johnson, David	Sampson, Rob
Boushy, Dave	Jordan, W. Leo	Saunderson, William
Brown, Jim	Kells, Morley	Shea, Derwyn
Chudleigh, Ted	Klees, Frank	Sheehan, Frank
Clement, Tony	Leadston, Gary L.	Skarica, Toni
Elliott, Brenda	Marland, Margaret	Smith, Bruce
Eves, Ernie L.	Martiniuk, Gerry	Stewart, R. Gary
Fisher, Barbara	McLean, Allan K.	Tilson, David
Flaherty, Jim	Munro, Julia	Turnbull, David
Ford, Douglas B.	Murdoch, Bill	Vankoughnet, Bill
Fox, Gary	O'Toole, John	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Galt, Doug	Palladini, Al	Witmer, Elizabeth
Grimmett, Bill	Parker, John L.	Wood, Bob
Guzzo, Garry J.		

The Acting Speaker: Those opposed will please rise one at a time.

Nays

Bartolucci, Rick	Conway, Sean G.	Marchese, Rosario
Bisson, Gilles	Crozier, Bruce	Phillips, Gerry
Boyd, Marion	Cullen, Alex	Pouliot, Gilles
Bradley, James J.	Gerretsen, John	Pupatello, Sandra
Brown, Michael A.	Hoy, Pat	Ruprecht, Tony
Caplan, David	Kormos, Peter	Sergio, Mario
Castrilli, Annamarie	Kwinter, Monte	Silipo, Tony
Christopherson, David	Lankin, Frances	Wildman, Bud
Churley, Marilyn	Laughren, Floyd	Wood, Len
Cleary, John C.	Lessard, Wayne	

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 49; the nays are 29.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Shall the bill be referred for third reading? No? It will go to a committee.

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): I refer the bill to the standing committee on administration of finance.

The Acting Speaker: Is it the wish of the House that this bill be referred to the committee on finance? Agreed.

It being past 6 o'clock, this House stands adjourned until 6:30.

The House adjourned at 1807.

Evening sitting reported in volume B.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneure: Hon / L'hon Hilary M. Weston

Speaker / Président: Hon / L'hon Chris Stockwell

Clerk / Greffier: Claude L. DesRosiers

Clerk Assistant / Greffière adjointe: Deborah Deller

Clerks at the Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

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Beaches-Woodbine	Lankin, Frances (ND)	Hamilton East / -Est	Agostino, Dominic (L)
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Brampton South / -Sud	Clement, Hon / L'hon Tony (PC) Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports	Hamilton West / -Ouest	Ross, Lillian (PC)
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Brantford	Johnson, Ron (PC)	High Park-Swansea	Shea, Derwyn (PC)
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Chatham-Kent	Carroll, Jack (PC)	Lake Nipigon / Lac-Nipigon	Pouliot, Gilles (ND)
Cochrane North / -Nord	Wood, Len (ND)	Lambton	Beaubien, Marcel (PC)
Cochrane South / -Sud	Bisson, Gilles (ND)	Lanark-Renfrew	Jordan, W. Leo (PC)
Cornwall	Cleary, John C. (L)	Lawrence	Cordiano, Joseph (L)
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Durham West / -Ouest	Ecker, Hon / L'hon Janet (PC) Minister of Community and Social Services / ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires	Middlesex	Smith, Bruce (PC)
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Etobicoke-Rexdale	Hastings, John (PC)	Niagara South / -Sud	Hudak, Tim (PC)
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Northumberland	Galt, Doug (PC)	Scarborough-Agincourt	Phillips, Gerry (L)
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Oakwood	Colle, Mike (L)	Scarborough East / -Est	Gilchrist, Steve (PC)
Oriole	Caplan, David (L)	Scarborough-Ellesmere	Mushinski, Marilyn (PC)
Oshawa	Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Scarborough North / -Nord	Curling, Alvin (L)
Ottawa Centre / -Centre	Patten, Richard (L)	Scarborough West / -Ouest	Brown, Jim (PC)
Ottawa East / -Est	Grandmaître, Bernard (L)	Simcoe Centre / -Centre	Tascona, Joseph N. (PC)
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Ottawa West / -Ouest	Cullen, Alex (L)	Sudbury	Bartolucci, Rick (L)
Oxford	Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Sudbury East / -Est	Martel, Shelley (ND)
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St Catharines-Brock	Froese, Tom (PC)	York Mills	Turnbull, Hon / L'hon David (PC) Minister without Portfolio / ministre sans portefeuille
St George-St David	Leach, Hon / L'hon Al (PC) Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement	York-Mackenzie	Klees, Frank (PC)
		Yorkview	Sergio, Mario (L)
		York South / -Sud	Kennedy, Gerard (L)

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Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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No. 259B

N° 259B

ISSN 1180-2987

**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

First Session, 36th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Première session, 36^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Wednesday 10 December 1997

Mercredi 10 décembre 1997



Speaker
Honourable Chris Stockwell

Président
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 10 December 1997

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 10 décembre 1997

The House met at 1831.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

HOUSE SITTINGS

Resuming the adjourned debate on the motion to extend the House calendar.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Mr Curling had the floor, so therefore we'll proceed with rotation. The member for Beaches-Woodbine.

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): I'm delighted to speak to this motion which extends the House calendar. I have to say that I always find these moments when we come near the end of a session interesting, to watch how a government manages its time and how it manages its legislative agenda. I have to say that if the government of the day had been subjected to the grade 3 testing that went on, we'd see the results would be very much below average.

I just want to relate three stories of what's happened in the last two weeks in this place and show you why I think it is, first of all, ridiculous that we are here debating a calendar motion to extend the House sitting by a week and how the government has mismanaged its agenda to bring us to this point.

We have had literally months of the House sitting with, in rapid succession, large pieces of legislation, very controversial pieces of legislation. We have seen consistently the government, in a very anti-democratic way, try to ram that legislation through the House, try to minimize public input, try to minimize both debate and any opposition or outside public attempt to convince the government to amend those bills. There's a long list of them, whether we're talking about when we were dealing in the spring with the megacity legislation or the Fewer School Boards Act, Bill 104, or whether of course we were dealing with Bill 160 this fall. Bill 160 overshadowed everything that was taking place in this Legislature.

But at the same time, while all of us were, in terms of the public, captivated by the debate that was going on about the future of our education system, we saw the government bring through final closure and final reading on taking away rent controls from tenants in this province; we saw them bring in a bill on workfare in this province that has elements in it which are so draconian in terms of

the powers given to workers to investigate people's home situations and their finances.

Amazing things just slipped through. They didn't slip through because there wasn't an attempt in this Legislature to have serious debate, but they slipped through because under the cover of the controversy of Bill 160 this government used time allocation motions, limited debate, limited opportunity for public input and rammed through legislation in their continuing anti-democratic fashion.

While they were busy with all of those big pieces of legislation, a number of other bills, which the government says are important now, sat at the wayside and didn't seem to have the priority the government now says they have. Let me give you three examples.

The government recently introduced Bill 164. Bill 164 purports to be a piece of legislation about instituting tax credits in a number of fields dealing with research and development, dealing with the film industry, dealing with the child care tax credit. If I had time at this point to be speaking on Bill 164, I'd go into depth about the broken promise in terms of the government's commitment to creating more child care spaces in this province. The government stood up and said, in a budget two years ago, "We are spending more than any government in the history of this province," with their announcement that year of \$40 million, the first down payment of \$200 million over five years. Not a penny of it was spent in that budget year.

This year, that money accrues to \$80 million; not a penny has been spent. Now they've wiped that out after all the boast of doing the most and the best and being the biggest and all of the superlatives that the government used and applied to themselves in a description of their agenda or their initiatives. Now we see that they're wiping all that out and they're proceeding with a child tax credit which actually takes money that the federal government has dedicated and passed down to the province to pass down to families to try and support poor children, families in poverty. What they're doing is pulling back that money from social assistance recipients and putting it into a tax credit and saying, "If you pay for child care and you can file for the tax credit and you're eligible for tax returns, well then you'll get some benefit out of this." But of course the poorest families whom this is designed to help are people who can't afford to put out the money for child care in the first place and will not be in a position to file a tax return to benefit from this tax credit. It is a sham in terms of its stated intention of helping poor families.

That's buried in Bill 164 along with a number of other tax credit initiatives. It is really and truly an omnibus piece of legislation. But interestingly enough, tacked on to Bill 164 are a couple of sections that actually are amendments to another bill, Bill 149, which, at the time that Bill 164 was introduced, hadn't even been passed yet. This is again another hallmark of this government, a government that moves so quickly, with such speed and such little attention to detail, that they make mistakes.

The legislative process of debate on second reading, referral to committee, public hearings and then clause-by-clause analysis before you bring the bill back for third and final reading — there's a reason for that process. That process is so people can give considered thought to a piece of legislation so that it can be reviewed, so that mistakes can be found and can be corrected in the legislative process of that bill.

But as this government rams things through and doesn't want to have hearings, it has to find other ways to correct its mistakes. So we see in Bill 164 amendments to other pieces of legislation that had not even been passed at the time they were introduced; a bizarre way to manage — I may say "mismanage" — the governance of this province and this Legislative Assembly and the government's legislative agenda.

That's Bill 164, a huge piece of legislation. Most of the elements of that were announced in the budget earlier this year. Nine months have gone by and the government never introduced the legislation to give effect those grandiose announcements they made. Technically under the House calendar this is the last week. What we're debating tonight is a motion that will extend the calendar for one more week so the government can deal with the business they've been unable to manage. So here we are in the last week, they've just recently tabled this legislation, they want it through second reading and they today tabled a time allocation motion which didn't even allow for it to go to committee.

Fortunately we in the New Democratic Party took some steps to force the government to send that bill to committee. We'll see what happens. The government may well table another time allocation motion and deem it to have been dealt with by committee and deem it to have been reported out. If you can sit in a Legislature like this under the government's new rules and have this evening session count as a separate day from the afternoon session that we finished just 25 minutes ago in Mike Harris' Ontario, in Mike Harris' Legislature, anything goes. So I suppose that they can pass a motion and deem it to have been dealt with, but again won't that underscore the point we make about the anti-democratic tendencies of this government?

So Bill 164 is there and they want it passed by the end of the year. There are some problems in it, but you know what? They'll fix them in another bill next year. That's the way this government operates.

Let me give you another example: Just last week, the Minister of Agriculture tabled a bill which has amendments to the Milk Act. It was announced that this was something they were talking to the Dairy Farmers of

Ontario about months ago, but we've not had any report in this Legislature from the minister. We have had no update on those discussions. It turns out he's done a whole deal with the Dairy Farmers of Ontario and they have been patiently, for a while, and then anxiously awaiting the government, the Minister of Agriculture, to table the legislation. So it was tabled last week. This is technically the last week of the session, the final week of the session, and the minister wants us to have second and third reading. He says, "Don't worry, there's nothing to it."

1840

Hold on a second. Let's look at this. I actually find myself not in opposition to the bill. But we only got the technical briefing from the ministry today and we find that there are some other little amendments slipped in to fix up some other problems that have nothing to do with the main intent of the bill. The main intent of that bill is to transfer the dairy milk quality program, which is the inspection of raw milk — and it's at the farm, not at the processing plant — to a self-regulatory regime where the dairy farmers will self-regulate and ensure the quality.

There are some people who would have questions about that, whether self-regulation is appropriate or not. I think the dairy farmers have made a very strong case about what they're going to do, because it's in their interest as an industry to improve the quality of inspections. For example, there are currently nine inspectors working for the province. They're expanding the number to 16. They've offered jobs to six of those inspectors to come over; the other three have been offered jobs to stay in the Ministry of Agriculture if they want to stay in OMAFRA. They've worked through some of those issues, but isn't it to be expected that those would be questions you would want to ask and wouldn't you want to have time and wouldn't the consumers want to be able to know this legislation is coming through, be able to look at it, perhaps come to some hearings, make some points?

I think the dairy farmers would have been very happy with that kind of a process and actually find our concerns about the process quite legitimate. They want the bill passed but I think their anger now rests with the Minister of Agriculture who has botched the process. It wasn't a priority for the government. They left it till to the last two weeks to bring this in. They want it to pass third reading and into law within two weeks' time because the deal they cut with the Dairy Farmers of Ontario sees the startup operation of this new self-regulatory scheme beginning January 1.

We asked some questions today in the briefing. We asked, "Will this self-regulatory scheme cost the farmers any more money?" You know what? The ministry couldn't answer that. They have said they are giving \$125,000 startup money to the Dairy Farmers of Ontario, the organization, for the capital costs and computer costs — this is just startup, onetime money — plus \$300,000 a year for five years. The government is going to pay for this regulatory system to be put in place, this self-regulation, self-inspection. But nobody knows whether it's going to cost

more than that or not and/or what happens at the end of the four years.

Some would argue it is appropriate for an industry, if you're self-regulating, to be paying for that. We could debate that. But wouldn't it be nice to know the answer to that? If the ministry can't provide us with the answer and they haven't provided the farmers with the answer, this is why you debate bills, this is why you have hearings. You sort through some of those things.

Let me give you a third example. The government informed us at the House leaders' meeting that there's yet another budget bill to be introduced. Budget bill number 3 it was called because it wasn't introduced at that time and didn't have a bill number yet, because it doesn't get numbered until it's actually tabled in the Legislature and introduced for first reading. Budget bill number 3 is going to deal with fuel taxes. This will be interesting. Guess what? The Minister of Finance wants it passed by the end of this session. As recently as Monday and Tuesday, when we were talking to them, they hadn't tabled the bill, but they want it passed by the end of the session, second and third reading. The end of the session should be tomorrow, Thursday, but if this motion tonight passes at some point, which I assume it will, we will sit next week. But in that period of time they want they bill to get second and third reading.

Who in the public is even going to have an opportunity to get a copy of it, to read it, to understand it, to pass on comments to their elected representatives so that we can represent the interests of concerned citizens with respect to the bill? This is a shameful display of mismanagement on the part of the government.

I don't know how the members of the Conservative caucus can rationalize this with their own constituents, can rationalize a process in which the legislative process around bills, which is designed to ensure that you have good legislation, is being given such short shrift. Don't you find yourself horribly embarrassed to have to explain that you're introducing bills to fix mistakes in previous bills, to amend bills that haven't passed because you went too fast, because you didn't listen to people; or, more to the point these last two weeks, because you didn't give people time to have any input? You didn't give them an opportunity to see the legislation or comment.

Mr Speaker, you have been here for a long time. You know that legislative process — that was a compliment, sir.

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew North): He's been here a very long time.

Ms Lankin: A very long time, the member from Renfrew says.

You know that process is designed to ensure there are checks and balances on all of us. There is no greater court of opinion than public opinion. People who work in a field that may be affected by a piece of legislation know that field so much more intimately than any legislator, unless that legislator has a background in that specific field.

The process of a bill coming forward, of the opposition reviewing it and raising concerns and questions with the

government, of it going to committee and the public being able to make representations on areas of concern, leading to the government sometimes making amendments or the opposition parties proposing amendments that the government may or may not pass, is a process that's been put in place and has been long-standing. People of good faith, people who believe in the democratic process, believe in a process that brings balance, and a process that has checks and balances, and a process that is dedicated to providing the best legislation, the best laws possible.

I say to the government members, there may be times when I disagree with your legislation but I still want the legislation to be workable. I still want it to be good legislation, even if it's bad content, even if I disagree with the direction of it.

The process of making laws is a process entrusted to all of us, as we are democratically elected to represent constituencies. We are here as a microcosm of the public of Ontario to bring consideration, to bring our expertise, to bring debate to a bill. I know sometimes that doesn't happen. I know sometimes we move into partisan camps in the way in which we relate to a bill.

I want to tell you a story. I particularly say to some of the government members, as someone who had the honour of serving in the executive council for the province of Ontario, who had the honour of holding a number of cabinet posts, I recall pieces of legislation that I sponsored into this Legislature where members of the opposition raised concerns about a number of things. I worked hard with those critics to see if there was a way of accommodating those concerns, and similarly with a number of organizations and groups that would come forward. If I felt there was a way of addressing the concern completely, I would. If I felt we could support addressing it partially, finding a compromise, I would.

I recall on a number of occasions, sir, working with the health critic from your party at the time who had some ideas that I thought were good ideas. You know what? I even worked with her to rewrite the amendment so it was an amendment that we could accept so that health critic could table the amendment and have that pass in her name. That's the way I think we should operate in this place.

Mr Conway: You helped with my cheese curds.

Ms Lankin: The member from Renfrew is talking about cheese curds. That's a story to be told in the halls of Queen's Park. That was an interesting day. It was a very interesting day.

That give and take is important, not just in terms of our duty and responsibility to the representation of the public of Ontario, but it is inherently important to the end product. Without that you pass bad laws. You are passing bad laws, which you demonstrate every day by having to bring in other bills to amend the bills where you made the mistakes. It's a litany of failure in terms of your management of the legislative agenda.

I guess the thing that I find the most offensive about this motion to extend the sitting — it's not being here next week. I have much work to do in my constituency, but that's fine. There are bills that we will debate and we will

deal with that. That's fine. It's the — I'm trying to find a word that will not get me ruled out of order, the parliamentary word.

1850

Mr Conway: Quote Churchill.

Ms Lankin: Quote Churchill. You're never out of order if you quote Churchill, my friend says.

I believe that the government, by the direction they have set and continue to follow in this House with respect to their treatment of legislation, the disdain with which they treat the legislative process, the legislators of this assembly and, more importantly, the public of Ontario, the concerned public who care about pieces of legislation, who want to make representation — the utter disdain with which this government treats all those who should be part of the process of producing the laws of this province is, at the same time, breathtaking but unfortunately has become predictable.

I believe profoundly that one of the hallmarks of this government, no matter how much they want to wave around the flag of success of the Common Sense Revolution — many people would say it's not been successful — or the flag of success of how they've been able to stick to their agenda — many people would say the pain they have inflicted on people certainly makes it hard to call it a success — I believe what people will say about this government and will remember is the fundamental anti-democratic nature of this government.

I'm sorry to use excessive words, but the arrogance with which a group of people who have a majority feel they have the right to rule no matter what, have the right to push through — many, many members of the government caucus not even reading the legislation, just blindly following their cabinet members and then finding to their own embarrassment at times what that has meant.

It is a sad day when we see the matters of this House having fallen to a point where there is not the respect for democracy and people.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): Don't the Tory members want to speak?

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean): I'm pleased to have a chance to speak on this, and I know one of my colleagues will speak to the office across the hall about this right now to find out the next speaker on this issue.

This is an important House calendar motion. It deals with the time lines under which we sit here and debate the salient political issues of the day. It's important that we finish the business of this place before we take a holiday for ourselves. It's important that we get the work done first and holiday second. It's very, very important that we finish up that work.

There is a group of important pieces of legislation. There is the right-to-farm bill and an important bill on milk production presented by our colleague, M. Ville-neuve, and that is important to debate.

There are a number of other important pieces of legislation. Bill 164 would help create jobs, hope and opportunity; research and development. It would help child care

tax credits and it would further advance the job of the government. It's a very, very important bill.

With our new rule changes, I've had the opportunity to speak on the Financial Services Commission bill last week, Bill 149 on property assessment, Bill 164. We have had the opportunity to speak — if you check the record, more members will have the chance to speak and to enter debate, and that is very important for the province of Ontario.

The job creation agenda of this government is very important because this province used to be the economic engine of Canada, this province used to be a magnet for jobs, investment and opportunity; and then the 10 lost years, particularly the last five years, from 1990 to 1995, where this province saw our debt go from \$50 billion to \$100 billion almost overnight — no hope, no opportunity. We became known as a mismanaged debtor, overgoverned, overregulated and overtaxed. It's extremely important that we turn that around.

The numbers have been very encouraging: more than a quarter of a million net new jobs created. Where are the jobs? They're at Northern Telecom, 5,000 new jobs in Nepean; Newbridge Networks, 4,100 new jobs in Nepean; a new Rona warehouse opening up in Nepean this week, 250 new jobs.

With this House calendar motion, we can pass more research and development tax credits, we can pass co-op tax credits, the graduate tax credits, credits to help small business, the economic engine of Canada. It's very important. The ability for this House to get the job done first before we break for Christmas is a very important one and is very crucial.

The House calendar motion extends the fall sitting of the Legislature. Then I would enjoy the opportunity, as we look at the finance committee, to go into prebudget consultations, to listen more to the public, to consult and learn more about what should be in this budget, what other job creation initiatives will assist the solid job growth we've seen, which is extremely important. That is very crucial.

The important agenda on welfare reform will be part of that job creation agenda, and if we can pass some of those pieces of legislation we can deal with next week, there will be more hope and more opportunity for the future.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): Jobs paying \$6.

Mr Baird: "More jobs," the member for Fort York says; \$60,000- to \$70,000-a-year jobs — that is extremely important — many in the high-tech sector, well-paying jobs, jobs with dignity, jobs that people can raise a family on, jobs with benefits, spinoff jobs. It is a very important House calendar motion.

Look at the contribution that research and development and knowledge-based industries have made in this province. Mr Speaker knows. He has seen the impressive job creation in Ottawa-Carleton.

On a vu pendant les derniers six mois la création de beaucoup d'emplois partout dans la province, dans la région de Toronto, dans le comté de Fort York, où les industries financières et les banques —

Interjections.

M. Baird : Mon collègue le député de Fort York a toutes les grandes banques et les grandes entreprises financières situées dans sa circonscription. On a vu une augmentation du secteur privé dans son comté dans les deux dernières années. C'est très important.

We have seen some impressive job creation in the Durham region. We have seen some impressive job creation in Ottawa-Carleton, in the knowledge-based industries, which is extremely important. There's a lot of hope out there for job creation. That is really the centrepiece of the government's efforts and the important initiatives it takes to set the climate for job creation, including a number of the initiatives we'd like to be able to deal with next week with this House calendar motion. It's extremely important.

Ms Lankin: Like what?

Mr Baird: Like Bill 164, like the right-to-farm bill, like the —

Ms Lankin: But you had it at second reading.

Mr Baird: It's interesting, Mr Speaker. You hear every day in this House that there is not enough time for debate. We had all sorts of time for the opposition to stand up and debate Bill 164, but they had nothing to debate. I can only assume they were in complete agreement. They didn't rise to speak to the bill. They had had enough debate, by their own admission.

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): What about your closure motion? Where were you?

The Acting Speaker: Member for Welland-Thorold.

Mr Baird: They had had enough debate on the issue, which is something very important.

If you look other important pieces of legislation, the right-to-farm legislation is before this House. If you look at a number of the private members' bills, they are very important pieces of legislation that could be dealt with next week.

I can see the member for York Mills, the whip, has arrived. I know he is going to look over to me right now and indicate how much more debate we should have on this legislation. He wants me to give them more information on our job creation initiative.

1900

Ms Lankin: You have 12 more minutes and you've got to keep it going.

Mr Baird: Our colleagues in the opposition don't like to hear about the job creation initiative and the other important pieces of legislation.

People in Nepean are looking forward to a brighter economic future. Thousands of calls have been made in Nepean and the voice at the other end of the phone said, "You got the job." People are able to provide jobs for their community. They have been able to provide for their families. That's an extremely important thing. Many young families in Nepean have a dream of owning their own home. The new jobs and increased economic activities that we've seen in Ontario directly as a result of many initiatives like those in Bill 164 are coming up.

The member for High Park-Swansea was in Nepean and he saw some of the good news going on there. They spoke to him. He visited the Nepean Museum and saw

some of the excellent community participation we have. That's very important. The motion that will allow us to sit next week will help in that job creation issue.

I think it's extremely important that we are able to hear from other members of this place and have more debate. Because of that, I yield the floor.

Ms Lankin: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would like to ask for unanimous consent for the Conservative caucus to be able to split the time that was on the clock so that they don't lose any of it.

The Acting Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? No.

Mr Conway: I am pleased to have an opportunity to speak to the government motion standing in the name of the chief government whip, now the Honourable David Turnbull, which motion, as the member from the Beaches has indicated, is to extend the sitting time of the assembly through —

Ms Lankin: The member from the Beaches truculently said.

Mr Conway: Oh, I think the member from the Beaches is always funny and ebullient. I don't know where she gets that idea.

I'm happy to be here to have an opportunity to make some remarks about some issues of concern to my constituents. For the last couple of months I've been working diligently under the careful tutelage of the Reverend Derwyn Shea who is doing an admirable job of chairing the select committee on Ontario Hydro nuclear affairs. Prior to my experience in that committee, I always thought Derwyn Shea was just a noted Anglican divine from the west end, but I can tell you that having spent the last two months with the member from High Park, I've come to respect his not inconsiderable skill in chairing legislative committees. I say that with all seriousness. It's not been an easy task and he has done a difficult job very well.

Because Reverend Shea and Ms Johns and Mr Laughren and I have been down in the committee with others of our colleagues, we've been missing the opportunity to get on the Bradley channel, but I'm here tonight to get a few moments of time to address a couple of issues of concern to my constituents. One of the advantages of this kind of motion is that it affords honourable members an opportunity to raise issues that are of concern to themselves or obviously of concern to their constituents.

I'm particularly pleased tonight to have the Minister of Health in our midst. She is being advised by the member for Wellington. I'm sure the member for Wellington will know something of the issue I am going to raise this evening, and that has to do with the new process for getting or renewing a health card in Ontario.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): Witmer and Arnott are two of the moderate members, I might add, of the Tory caucus.

Mr Conway: My friend Bradley says Witmer and Arnott are two of the moderate members of the rainbow coalition, and that's true. Every so often I go up into the library, sit down and quietly read the Kitchener-Waterloo Record. I want to say to my good friend the Minister of Health, I never cease to be amazed at how helpful, how

candid and how constructive Ms Witmer is when talking to her constituents and the general readership of the Kitchener-Waterloo Record. Why, just a few days ago she gave what read like a most interesting editorial board with the K-W Record.

Hon David Turnbull (Minister without Portfolio): It's a good newspaper.

Mr Conway: It's a very good newspaper. The Kitchener-Waterloo Record is a very fine newspaper and there's nothing better in it than reading the observations of the Minister of Health about Bill 160 or about other aspects of the government's agenda.

Setting that aside, I want to say to the Minister of Health, and hopefully with the support of the rural caucus in this chamber, that the government of Ontario is, at an administrative level, making a significant change effective January 1, 1998, in the manner of renewing OHIP cards — the health cards. Very simply, the change is this: Now, if you are a resident of Ontario and qualify for a health card, you are going to have to present yourself at an OHIP centre for the paperwork, including the photograph to be taken. I suppose if one lives in Toronto or London or Ottawa or Hamilton or Thunder Bay that's not going to be an issue, because in almost all of those urban centres there is an OHIP centre. But in rural Wellington, in rural Kent and certainly in rural Renfrew it is going to be a very real issue.

I say to the Minister of Health, I'm happy to supply this information to her because I had every intention — I might still after tonight have the intention — of asking the honourable minister a question.

Some days ago, I received from Dr C.R.S. Dawes, who is a very fine rural physician practising in West Renfrew county — Ray Dawes happens also to be the current chair of the rural section of the Ontario Medical Association. He has practised medicine in rural eastern Ontario for the last 15 or 20 years and he has some very good experience in these matters.

Dr Dawes wrote to Mary Catherine Lindberg, the assistant deputy minister of health, health-related programs, on October 29, 1997. Dr Dawes said in part:

"I write to you as a rural physician who is extremely concerned about the effect on rural residents of the recent OHIP policy requiring Ontario residents to travel to OHIP centres to have their photo OHIP ID card updated. I cannot overemphasize the significant hardship that will be borne by many residents of rural Ontario in attempting to comply with this request."

Dr Dawes practises in the Barrys Bay area of West Renfrew county, a very rural part of Ontario located about one hour's drive from Pembroke and a two-hour drive from Ottawa. The nearest OHIP centre is in Ottawa, though there may be a satellite established in Pembroke. So if you're one of Dr Dawes' patients living in a community like Barrys Bay or Madawaska or Palmer Rapids or Combermere, you've got at least a 70- to 90-minute drive one way to Pembroke and a two- to two-and-a-half-hour drive to Ottawa one way to get to an OHIP centre for the purpose of getting your picture taken

Dr Dawes goes on to say: "My patients are receiving a rather 'matter-of-fact' letter from OHIP instructing them to travel to Ottawa, a round-trip distance of some five to six hours. While some of my patients are well able to afford and arrange this trip, a significant number of my elderly and disabled patients are not. In fact many will not even understand the exact nature of the problem. If they read the letter" they receive from OHIP "and realize that they can call a 1-800 number, perhaps after several attempts to get through to the OHIP representative, they will be told that they can in turn make another long-distance call to Pembroke and arrange to have their photo taken there." This still represents a very considerable hardship.

He goes on: "I am surprised that not more consideration was given to rural residents particularly after the release of Mr Wilson's rural health policy which seemed to specifically recognize the needs of rural residents."

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Dr Dawes concludes by making a perfectly sensible recommendation, I say to my friend the Minister of Health, that this policy's administrative requirements should be amended so that rural residents could go to the nearest hospital to have that photograph taken.

I think that is an extremely practical and sensible suggestion, which I expect the eminently sane and sensible Minister of Health, Ms Witmer, to listen to and to respond to because it is a serious and immediate concern.

OHIP is telling people that the past policy of granting leniency and the benefit of the doubt to people in this connection will not carry on beyond December 31, 1997. That means that people are going to get only one general notice, and if they don't come up with an answer but show up and present themselves at their doctor's office or at a hospital some time in January, February or any time after January 1, 1998, they are going to be rejected.

Can you imagine, I say to the member for Wellington, what somebody from Alma or Arthur, a 75- or 80-year-old resident, is going to feel like if they travel down to Guelph or Kitchener and they haven't complied with some bureaucratic requirement and they're turned back at the hospital or the doctor's office? I think that's going to be a very nasty situation, not just for the patient —

Interjections.

Mr Conway: I'm not going to try and compete.

The Acting Speaker: Could you reduce your discussions? Or if you want to talk, you're free to go outside.

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth): Just give us a few minutes.

The Acting Speaker: Especially you, the member for Perth.

Mr Conway: It's a serious matter, I say to my colleagues in the House and particularly rural members. Certainly Dr Dawes's patients, who are two hours or more from Ottawa one way, are going to be very upset if they find that effective January 1 they are going to be turned back because they don't have an updated OHIP card. It's one of those small matters that's not an issue in urban Ontario.

I was struck, I might add, that the Ottawa Citizen, in an editorial of October 10, 1997, editorialized under the title

"Access to Health Cards Vital." The Ottawa Citizen was supporting a complaint made by regional councillor Alex Munter, who was making the point that there was a hardship for people under this new plan. Senior citizens in West Carleton, in Kanata, were going to be seriously disadvantaged because they were going to have to go down to the Albert Street office in downtown Ottawa.

I can't disagree with the Citizen's editorial and I support the basic point, but let me say that if somebody living in Kanata or in West Carleton or in Rideau township is going to be disadvantaged by this policy because they've got a half-hour trip down the Queensway or on Highway 16 to the Albert Street OHIP office, can you imagine somebody who is 75 years of age coming from Palmer Rapids or Wilno or Rolphton down to Pembroke or more likely to Ottawa? That's just absolutely unacceptable.

I know the province is increasingly urbanizing and suburbanizing, but we still have a million or more Ontarians living in very rural environments. So I say to the Minister of Health tonight — and I know in saying this I can enlist the support of my friend from Arthur, the moderate member of the government caucus from Wellington — please take every opportunity between now and the end of this pre-Christmas session to make the changes at the department of health so there can be some reasonable redress along the lines Dr Dawes has suggested. Let there be an opportunity for people in rural environments to go to the local hospital or the local clinic.

I can think of a clinic up in Lennox and Addington. It's a long way from Kingston or Belleville. A lot of rural residents along that Highway 41 corridor could go to Northbrook and get their picture taken at the clinic, perhaps. But certainly as a minimum let there be an opportunity for rural residents to go to the nearest hospital. That may not solve all the problems but it is certainly going to solve many of the problems that have been identified by a number of people.

I cite Dr Ray Dawes because of his experience and his current involvement with a number of government initiatives, particularly in the area of rural health, and I am very hopeful that Ms Witmer is in fact going to respond to the suggestion that has been made in this connection.

I want to make a couple of other observations. I want to congratulate the government for the repeal of Bill 109. There's been so much activity around here that we sometimes don't stop and celebrate very significant and appropriate and thoughtful reversals. It is obviously the current fashion on the treasury bench to strike out at the opposition and say, "What's your policy?" That's a fair thing for any government to do and it's been done since the democratic dialogue began in a parliamentary context centuries ago.

I want to congratulate Ms Bassett for her very fine statement of I believe November 7. I also want to congratulate her for getting off a very good line at my expense last week, but she's not here. I hope my friend Reverend Shea will convey my commendation in that connection to her.

First of all, it's good policy. I'm very pleased that the government has understood the fundamental error that was made a year and has effectively repealed Bill 109 and is going to maintain provincial government funding for libraries. As a rural member, I can tell you that is important assistance. I note that the funding will be less than it has been. I can fight about that, but the basic point I want to make is that the government has effectively repealed Bill 109 and recognized the error of its ways in that connection.

This will not be the first retreat and this will not be the first repeal. I want to say that Mr Kennedy and Ms Boyd have, each in their own way, over the last number of weeks and perhaps months, been highlighting another area of basic and fundamental wrong-headedness in so far as current government policy is concerned. I cannot imagine that there is anybody within the broad ambit of the Ontario public service who thinks for one nanosecond that transferring responsibility for public health to local government makes any sense. It is madness on stilts, driven undoubtedly by a fiscal imperative. I can just hear my friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer saying years ago, "If we're going to trade, if we're going to take that 50% cost of education, I want a make-up of the corresponding amount of money." Unfortunately, public health got caught in that net.

Is there anyone in this House who really thinks for a moment that public health programs having to do with everything from sexually transmitted diseases and their amelioration in the community to tobacco abatement programs belong at the local level? I can't believe there's anyone. I know there will nobody at the Ministry of Health. It's not a big-ticket item. It is profoundly wrong-headed, backward-looking, counterproductive public policy and it will be changed. It cannot stand because it makes no sense. Regrettably, though it does not necessarily involve a great deal of money, it involves some very significant issues about health education and preventive health strategies.

Can you imagine, for example, a situation where — and I say this without prejudice; my 81-year-old father who smoked for 65 years and might even be watching will be reminding me of this later this week — at the local level we tied the tobacco producers of Haldimand, Norfolk and Oxford counties to support a public health office in Woodstock or Simcoe and part of that local tie is to go to support Dr Conway whose job it is, under a provincial mandate, to aggressively pursue tobacco abatement programs in the schools and public buildings and elsewhere across the region?

It is on the face of it absurd. I say that without prejudice to the tobacco farmers and I say that without prejudice to the good people who will run these programs at the municipal level. It is setting up such a contradiction in function and responsibility as to be impossible. I simply have to say that I expect to live long enough in this Parliament to see that policy reversed, just as the library funding policy of two years ago has been mercifully reversed by Ms Bassett.

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Time does not permit me to cover but one more subject, and I want to take a moment to raise again, on behalf of people living across the reaches of rural eastern Ontario — I'm glad to see my friend Mr Harry Danford here — that there is no doubt that highways and highway maintenance are always an issue in a province this large and in a climate where we have so much winter. I think it was some European, de Tocqueville type who came and said, "My God, Canada: too much geography and too much winter." Whoever that person was, he spoke an essential truth. It's amazing how many politicians and policymakers now seem to forget that self-evident reality about life in this part of what we used to call British North America. But I'll tell you, if you drive across the rural reaches of Hastings, Renfrew, North Addington and Haliburton and you do so between November 1 and April 1, you will understand that the combination of the rugged Shield territory and winter make for some very hazardous conditions.

The last couple of weeks along the Highway 17 corridor, which is a major provincial highway — it's the Trans-Canada Highway from Ottawa up to North Bay, the major provincial highway that will remain, after the downloading, a provincial responsibility. I have had a number of people, from commercial travellers to fire chiefs to regular motorists and municipal politicians, to name but four categories, complain to me in recent days about the deterioration of winter highway maintenance, and we have had some very serious accidents and a couple of tragic fatalities in recent days which have focused public concern on that issue.

I say to the treasury bench and to the House generally, no more important responsibility do we have than to ensure that we maintain particularly through the winter months an adequate and above-standard quality of highway maintenance so that everyone travelling — young, middle-aged and old — can do so safely and securely.

Mr Marchese: It's a pleasure to speak to this House calendar motion, because I've got to tell you, in speaking to a whole lot of people in my riding of Fort York, they want a break from this government. They don't want to have to suffer through another week of yet more perfidy perpetuated against them, and not just the people in Fort York, but the whole province. They want a break from a government that is about to impose on them market value assessment, which is referred to as actual value assessment but whose effect is the same. They are about to be whacked with property tax increases, and seniors are about to be whacked with that fairness bill as well, the same one, where many of them are going to experience tax increases.

The Minister of Finance says: "Don't worry. It's all about achieving fairness." "Fairness" is a big word with this government. "Don't worry; it's revenue-neutral as well. Some people are going to get hit and some are not. Some are going to get a break." The people who are going to get a break are hardly going to notice it, but those who are going to get an increase are going to notice it indeed.

Actual value assessment is coming, and it's going to mean property tax increases for people in my riding of Fort York. I can tell you, they don't like it and they want a break from this government.

They want a break from the other mess that you have downloaded on to our municipalities. That's Bill 162, the download bill, the bill that is going to dump on to municipalities a heavy burden and responsibility. In our view, that burden will come in the form of higher property taxes and a lesser quality of service. They can expect both in my view. They argue that they have taken half of the education portion out of property taxes, but they are going to download to the municipality an equal amount of services.

But what do they download? They download an issue such as housing. No jurisdiction in the world that I'm aware of downloads housing as a responsibility to the municipality, yet this government is about to do just that. This bill will be proclaimed shortly, ready to go. Housing is being downloaded to the municipality. Who do you think is going to pay for that heavy responsibility? It's the homeowner and the tenant. Many of you observers may not know that tenants pay a hefty property tax. Some tenants do not know that. But the taxes are hefty, and they will be paying, and the homeowner will be charged with the heavy responsibility and burden of paying for housing.

Even David Crombie, a Tory buddy of theirs, said: "Don't do that. Don't download housing to the municipality." Remember, the former mayor, Mr Crombie, was obviously a city politician, and he understood that this is one service that should not be borne by the municipality, meaning the tenant and the homeowner. He knew that. He understood that. He understood, as a good Tory, possibly red, that this is a service that should be paid by the provincial government. It's a simple thing. Most people who are in the know, who are worldly, understand this isn't something you pass down. It doesn't speak very highly of this government when I say those in the know, those who are worldly, those who have a good understanding of issues know you don't do that. These people are.

They're downloading, as well as housing, public health, worth \$225 million. These guys say, "Don't worry. It's a responsibility we can pass on" — not dump, pass on — "to these folks, because they asked for it. They want public health." Sure. If you put a gun to their head, of course they're going to say, "Please give it to me, and in a hurry."

Mr Kormos: Oh, they gave it to them.

Mr Marchese: They did, but they pretend there was no gun to their head. Public health, \$225 million, competing with basic stuff like sewer, water, garbage, things of that nature — to be in a position where people are competing for soft services such as public health, housing, child care, welfare, competing with all of that at the same time? Most municipal people understand that it is fair and just to pick up the cost as a homeowner or as a tenant for things that are basic hard services such as water, transportation, garbage, sewers. They understand that. But to pick up all these soft services is, in the minds of reasonable-minded, ordinary people, wrong.

Not for these guys. That's because these folks here have a different ideology and they come from a different place. I'm not sure where, and it's unfair to call them amphibianlike in their style of politics, but I tell you, Speaker —

The Acting Speaker: Just be careful in the choice of your words.

Mr Marchese: Mr Speaker, I try, as you know, to choose my words very carefully, but when one says these things, one presents them in the form of an analogy so that people understand the style of the politics with something more graphic that they can appreciate.

The other day I mentioned the word — what was the word? It was a word that connects to “oil” and I was saying it's — what is the word? It escapes me. It's not “litigious.” Even I have forgotten it, Speaker. There you go. But you get the drift.

Mr John L. Parker (York East): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I think the word that my friend is searching for is “lugubrious.”

The Acting Speaker: I don't think that his debate is lugubrious at this time. Please proceed.

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Mr Marchese: “Lugubrious” is indeed a good word, and I love that word. It is the mood that this government creates for all of Ontario, because it's funeral-like. Their policies are so funèbre that people feel lugubrious in response to their policies indeed. That wasn't the word I was selecting carefully, but I appreciate my good friend John, l'avocat, for that particular word. I'm always looking for good words to depict the policies and the character of this government, because it describes the value system that these people are representing.

To go on on the download, these are the same folks who speak about disentanglement. Mr Wettlaufer would know, because I think he was with me on that committee, that they proudly speak about how we have disentangled things so that everybody understands what they're paying for. Imagine that. I thought —

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): You created that word.

Mr Marchese: We didn't create that word. It's true that we attempted a solution on that matter, and it is true that we didn't do it, quite correctly. You're quite right. But then you guys come along and you say, “We finally disentangled.” For me, “disentangled” means you separate it — right, John? — and you say, “Okay, I got welfare.”

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: John, listen to me.

The Acting Speaker: No, no. Member for Fort York, you're addressing the Legislature of Ontario. You're not in a bar. You're not in any other place. You are addressing the Legislature of Ontario, and I would expect you to act accordingly and talk accordingly.

Mr Marchese: Speaker, I appreciate the rectitude that you're trying to impose on this House. But, Speaker, through you, you can't sanitize the remarks that we make in this place. You cannot do that, because if you try to do that, this place will become insipid, and nobody is going to

watch the proceedings of this House. The reason why they watch the proceedings is because we've got something to say, and it's often graphic enough that people appreciate it. You can't speak in either insipid terms or abstract terms, because if you do so, no one will follow the proceedings of the House. You've got to reach out.

I know the member for Etobicoke-Rexdale understands what I'm saying when I say that disentanglement means you separate two things. If you separate whose responsibility it is to pay for welfare, for example, people said, “Okay, the province pays for welfare.” Municipalities and the rest of the electors, wherever they are, would say: “I understand that. That means we don't share the cost as a municipality. I see. It's the province that pays for welfare.” That, Monsieur le député de Etobicoke-Rexdale, is what I mean by disentanglement.

Are you okay, member for Etobicoke-Rexdale?

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: I was worried for his health.

I'm trying to explain to the public. I know that he's obviously entertained by my speech, but more clearly —

Interjection: We're looking forward to his comments. He can be up next.

Mr Marchese: I want to hear from him, as always, but it's important for the public to understand that these folks disentangled nothing. Welfare has not been disentangled. Communities and the province share that. That is not a disentanglement. What does it mean? It means people are still confused about who's in charge. Child care has not been disentangled. They say it has, but it hasn't been disentangled. It means municipalities are paying for it, and the province. These guys say, “We finally disentangled. Everybody knows now who pays for what,” but no, it isn't true. I don't think that is what disentanglement was intended to mean, unless they have a different definition for that.

They have dumped on to the municipality soft services that should be paid properly by an income tax system. Everybody's saying that. All those in the know who have a clear understanding of what should be paid by whom understand, accept and say it is the province that should have the responsibility for that. But not these guys. The reason they are dumping these responsibilities down is to get out of some of these responsibilities and shift down blame, responsibility and pain through the incursion of additional expenses through property taxes. They are going to be paying more. These guys say no. We argue yes. But wait for the property tax bill. Better still, wait to see whether or not the service you had before is still there. People want a break from these guys.

We had the amalgamation of the city of Toronto with all the other cities. Do you recall that, Peter? You'll recall that we had a referendum in this city and all of the other cities and the borough, and they said no. Overwhelmingly they said no; 77% said no. Speaker, do you think it is right?

Mr Kormos: Why didn't they listen?

Mr Marchese: Because it's an autocratic government, dictatorial in its approach to people and issues. They didn't listen.

You hear from time to time these fine ministers and the Premier say: "Oh, we listen. We want to listen to the people." Sure, it's coming. "We're going to listen to you after we get re-elected, when we have nothing else that we want to harm the province with." That's when they're going to listen to you. But in the meantime, when people have something to say on the issue of amalgamation, these autocratic folks have said no. They said no to that.

People want a break. They want a break from a government that has imposed Bill 160, a bill which these fine folks say is going to improve the educational system. Speaker, as a former teacher I can tell you — Mike Harris, the Premier, should know too. Mind you, he was a teacher, but it was a time when people could get in with grade 13. Not to diminish those folks who were there with only grade 13 and then they became teachers, I don't want to diminish that, but I worry, because if he claims that he was a former teacher, and I being one as well, I can tell you there is nothing in that bill that is intended to help teachers or students.

There are three things that this government and the Minister of Education say about this bill that are going to help people out.

They're going to say, "We're making it more accountable." Do you know what that means, Speaker? It means they are centralizing the finances of the educational system, taking hold of it, getting rid of the trustees, who usually knock most provinces that want to take money out: taking hold of the financing of the education system so they can start to give less. But they don't call that giving less to the system; they call that being fair. "Everybody's going to be treated fairly." That, to me — and that's why we're not getting the legislative grants — means that they will bring the educational grants to students down from where they're at. Metropolitan Toronto is going to be hit hard. Metro Toronto potentially can and will lose a whole lot of millions. Many of us are worried \$500 million will disappear.

They say Bill 160 is going to improve the educational system by controlling class size, and they make it appear as if class size is going to be reduced. Nothing of the sort. They're talking about an average class size of 25 at the elementary level and 22 at the secondary level. Nothing has changed. You have done nothing. But these fine perpetrators of myth create the notion that somehow class size will be reduced. Not true.

The third one is that there's going to be more contact time, and that's going to improve the educational system. If you eliminate prep time but you don't bring those savings back into the classroom, you've done nothing by way of greater contact of those few teachers with the students. You've done nothing.

These are the only three issues that these people can talk about that are in Bill 160 that are going to improve the educational system. Speaker, I ask you, as a hopefully reasonable man, do you think that in the issues I have

mentioned, those three items will bring greater fairness, equality and improvement in the educational system?

I say to you no. What will do it is if you bring greater parental involvement. You don't do it by selecting about 20 people to do that job, or 10 or five people to do the job in the school; you do it by involving those 95% of the people who never get involved in the education of the children. If they want to do that — the former Minister of Labour is a former trustee, I believe, and I'm sure teacher. She would know that would improve the quality of education. But there is absolutely nothing in Bill 160 that will improve it.

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We need to expose that myth. People want a break from this government, not another week of more perfidy perpetrated upon them. They don't need that. The rapidity with which they introduced bills has been short of incredible. They can't manage anything, because they've introduced too many bills.

When my good friend Sean Conway from Renfrew says he's happy that this government has taken back 109 and they have learned from their mistakes, I say to you they're incompetent. That's why they have taken that bill back. We used to fund libraries at \$40 million a year. It's now \$20 million less in that pot of money. We've had hearings upon hearings saying to these fine folks here, "Please don't do it." Then finally we get a new minister who says, "Okay, we learned a couple of things." I say nonsense. They're incompetent. They should have known when we had hearings that they were wrong, but they go ahead and do that.

People want a break from your policies. I urge those of you who are watching, we are engaged in a petition for a referendum campaign on Bill 160 to protest the reptilian policies of this government. I tell you, get involved —

The Acting Speaker: Order. I corrected you on the word "amphibian." "Reptilian" is in the same family, in my opinion, and I don't accept that. I find this demeaning; I find it insulting.

Mr Marchese: These cold-blooded Homo sapiens here on the other side are ruining our province, and we've got to fight back. I want to urge people to get involved in this petition for a referendum campaign. Put these people to the wall. They support referenda. If they do indeed support them, let's get the 700,000 signatures and bring that to them.

Mr Alex Cullen (Ottawa West): I came into this chamber expecting to debate second reading on Bill 170, An Act to amend the Milk Act. As a matter of fact, I was all prepared to milk this particular subject, but unfortunately I was given a bum steer and I'm a little cheesed off that I can't get to the meat of the matter. But now that I've exhausted my repertoire, I know your blood curdles at any further puns that I might make and there's no whey I'm going to do anything more. But I find myself instead standing before the House speaking on a calendar motion.

The calendar motion we have of course is to extend the sitting of the House. As all members know, the standing orders would have us finish our session tomorrow at 6

o'clock, but instead the session of the House has been extended a further week, plus we have the night sittings not only to 9:30 but to midnight. We're doing this because the government has a tremendous backlog of legislation to deal with.

I seem to be losing my audience here, Mr Speaker. I'm just wondering, is there quorum in the House?

The Acting Speaker: Would you please check if there is quorum.

Clerk at the Table (Mr Todd Decker): A quorum is present, Speaker.

Mr Cullen: It's gratifying to hear that I do have the attention of the House and the quorum of 30 members to do the job.

In speaking to this calendar motion, I have the opportunity of bringing but, I guess it is, two and half months' worth of experience of sitting in this House, which is not a lot compared to a number of members sitting around this chamber. I have to say, though, that in the brief time that I have been here, I have seen this government present time allocation motions. I have seen this government withdraw legislation, flip-flop on legislation. Bill 136 is one that comes to mind. I see as well major, significant changes going through this House with very little opportunity for public input and public hearings.

I have to reflect that it was only two and a half months ago that I was elected to this position, and in terms of my observation here in terms of how the House conducts its business and what business it conducts, clearly we are seeing a change from what I perceive to be the democratic process of representational government, of a deliberative government, because this is a deliberative House. This is a House of representatives who deliberate on legislation.

A long time ago, more years than I care to confess, I understood the legislative process: first reading; second reading; going to committee and the opportunity for the public to participate and help the government, the Legislature of the day, perfect legislation; third reading; and then it being adopted by this House as an expression of the sovereign will of the people of Ontario.

Quite frankly, that's not how things operate here. If I go back to the concerns that I dealt with in Ottawa West in my by-election, which I've tried to present here and debate on different bills — and I have to say that I'm pleased to have had the opportunity to participate in debate on significant legislation before this House. I can think in terms of rent control; I can think in terms of educational reform; I can think in terms of provincial down-loading; I can think in terms of even the tax credit legislation we just had earlier today. But it seems to me that something is lacking in this process. Even though our time is being extended to facilitate the passage of business that presumably is to benefit the citizens of Ontario, quite frankly I think we have been shortchanged.

The concern I have is our ability to allow the process to function properly, our ability to allow the public to participate and our ability to remember that we are here at the behest of the people of Ontario. We are not sovereign in this House so that when we take this seat we are answer-

able to no one; we have a mandate and we can go as we please. Yes, governments are elected with mandates. I was elected with a mandate, but even so, it behooves us all to take into consideration the varying points of view, to take into consideration concerns raised by the public, and to make the appropriate accommodation when the circumstances require it.

I know there are other members of this House who have been on a school board, who have been on municipal council, regional council at the municipal level, and know that there is a requirement for due process. Due process protects us all. I alluded in my comments earlier today when we were dealing with Bill 164 to the whole notion of small-l liberal democracy — deliberative, consultative democracy that is at the behest of the people we represent — and how that runs into conflict with the government. To govern of course is to choose, and government itself, if it wishes to fulfil its mandate, has issues it must put forward if it wants to be efficient, if it wants to make sure its agenda is put in place and get on with the job, and sometimes these two values conflict.

We have seen it time and again. Indeed, every time the government comes in with what used to be an exception to the process, time allocation, for example — now we have time allocation being moved as a matter of course. What happens with time allocation? There's only so much time for discussion. Quite frankly, I thought being involved in politics meant that you had to have patience, you had to listen to people. I've done it at the municipal level; others have as well. It's part of the process, a necessary part.

But I find that when, for example, an issue goes to committee, indeed when there are only so many days for hearings and there are amendments being put forward and you're only allowed two hours to consider all the amendments that are concerned and amendments are voted on without the benefit of explanation, without the benefit of debate, without the benefit of consideration, and then we find afterwards this government coming in with bills after the fact to amend legislation they just passed but days before, weeks before, it calls into question the whole process.

My friends opposite may say: "Oh, it doesn't matter. We're dealing with the opposition. They always complain." But I can tell you, Bill 160 focused so much attention on the proceedings of this House that people are now very much concerned about how the deliberative democratic process works, never mind government. We give government authority; we give government money through our taxes. It is the choice of this House to do so, and government does its job. But when government is bringing in policy changes through this House, it has to give way to the democratic process, because if you do not, you bring the democratic process into disrepute and then people find other ways of ensuring that their interests are heard.

Why was it that when I was growing up in this province, we had a 29-year reign of Conservative government here in Ontario? Because that government knew when to pause, knew when to listen to other people, knew when to make accommodations. It didn't give way to everybody,

but it continually got re-elected because people thought, on balance, it was doing a good job and you could talk to them. That's not the word for this government. No one out there in Ontario believes you can talk to this government, because no one in Ontario believes this government will listen.

1950

Here we're dealing with a House calendar motion that extends our time to deal with debate. It's at the sufferance of the government. They come in with time allocation motions, but quite frankly, they are not interested in the comments here.

I will say to this House that on our side here, our duty is to oppose, naturally, but in the process of opposition, we would provide criticism of legislation; we would show where the flaws would be. A sensible government, wishing to ensure that it is governing on behalf of all the residents of Ontario — another requirement or obligation of a government is to understand it's doing so for all of its residents — would then be able to take upon itself: "Well, here's a point. We don't have to acknowledge that it came from the member for Ottawa West or the member for any other opposition seat, but here is a point," and they make the appropriate adjustments. Who is to benefit? The residents of Ontario. Whose legislation is it? The government's legislation. What happens at the end of the day? We have a better product.

It's not that I'm expecting that my colleagues will listen to every word that I say with such fascination as I know, Mr Speaker, you do, but it's simply the process of forming policy, of deliberation. When I sit at municipal council dealing with a zoning bylaw, something that affects neighbours on a street, I'm obliged to hear everyone who comes forward and I'm obliged to take that into account. My discussion and my vote are transparent, public for all. There is a due process. It's not done all at once. There's a proper hearing, proper notification, a due process. Why do we believe in due process? Why do we believe in the rule of law? Because it's fair. It's fair for everybody.

When we walk away from that because it's inefficient for government — bear in mind that the exigencies of government often conflict with the democratic process. I know this. I've worked as a civil servant supporting my minister. Face it: In this place, the civil service does not work for the Legislature. Not at all. When I was a municipal politician, the civil service in the municipality, in the city of Ottawa or the regional municipality of Ottawa-Carleton, worked for council, so when I called up for a concern or an explanation, they responded. They understood that. But here it is not so. Here it is not so because civil servants work for the government, and the government is represented by 82 seats in this Legislature, not by all 133. We like to think they report to us because, after all, it is all 133 of us who pass the estimates, who set the laws in place. That may be so, but even then, when we're proposing or when the government proposes a piece of legislation and I call up and look for an explanation that I want to bring to a public meeting and I'm denied that, that

only brings home the fact that they do not work for the Legislature; they work for the government.

The government has an awesome responsibility because it has all that power, all that obligation, all that responsibility. It has to do the job right. We may have our differences of opinion about how to deal with the deficit, we may have our differences of opinion about how to deal with welfare, how to deal with municipalities, but you've got to do the job right. I can pull out from under my desk example after example after example of abuse of process. Quite frankly, whether it's Bill 26 or the time allocation motions or anything else, if you believe that what you're doing is right, then you stand the heat, you take the time to listen to people and you do the job right.

I have seen members opposite in committee, at hearings, listening to the public, and they are doing their job. They may not agree with what the public is putting forward, but they do their job. But I just have to compare and contrast. I can look at other Legislatures where they would have taken the time to listen to people.

I look at the federal House. The federal House meets five days a week. The federal House does not move time allocation and does not shorten hearings. As long as there are people willing to come to a committee and speak to an item, by and large they accommodate them. That happens to be the tradition of that House.

Here we're seeing traditions change, even before I came in here. I took office on September 15. I'm seeing all these traditions change. I tell my friends opposite that when it comes to 1999 and we have the election on the record of the government, it will not only be the substance of the policies they put forward but how they conducted themselves. It's just proof positive.

For those who live and die by polls, it was just here this week in the newspapers: style. We know that perception is reality in politics. Style is important. Doing it right is important. People will remember how things were rammed through. Is it necessary to ram it through? Of course, the government points to the opposition for delay, delay, delay. Well, quite frankly, the rules mitigate against delay. We're long gone from the time when the member from North Bay could stand up and bring the proceedings of the House to a halt by reading off every lake, every pond, every —

Mr Kormos: That was bush league.

Mr Cullen: That may have been bush league, but it was the member from North Bay. It was well before he reached the government benches.

Mr Conway: Kormos was major league.

Mr Cullen: My friends are telling me who is major league and who is bush league in all of this. All I can say to you is that as someone who believes that legitimacy is conveyed because you do the process right, if you do the process wrong you make the product illegitimate and you pay for it. That's all there is to it. You get deflected from the substance of your issues because of how you conducted business.

Here we are dealing with a House calendar motion to conduct House business and extend the hours and extend the sitting of the House.

I seem to recall that earlier today we were dealing with Bill 164, a prime example: a bill that was supposed to deal with the outcome of the budget that was tabled in May, yet what happened? The bill does not get produced until November 22 or 25, whatever it was, some seven months later. We're into debate. There were no public hearings going to be held. Well, now suddenly it's going to committee, so we may have that opportunity. There was going to be a time allocation motion dealing with expenditures of millions of dollars, because the government was putting into place tax credit schemes to encourage job creation, yet we would not have the opportunity to debate that, to see if that's an appropriate use of public funds, because it actually is a tax expenditure.

Also, it was an omnibus bill and covered 20 other pieces of legislation unconnected to the creation of tax credits. Why? Because the government had passed earlier legislation that it had to go and amend. What happened with that earlier legislation? It was under time allocation. We didn't have the time to go through it properly, to hold our hearings properly, to have proper debate about it and therefore perfect the bill. So what happens? Now we find important amendments dealing with Bills 149 and 160, now on hold, going to a committee of the House, the standing committee on finance and economic affairs, and we are supposed to be out of here by December 18. How is this going to come to pass?

Obviously, the House leaders are going to come together and make some kind of arrangement. But it's just foolishness to find that a bill that's so important, because we passed two other bill earlier, that contains amendments to correct the mistakes the government made on its earlier legislation — we have yet a week to go, and I know the government opposite does not want us to come back until mid-March. I know the government would like to prorogue the session and come back to a new session, but it has to deal with this legislation promised back in May 1997 and encompassing amendments to legislation we just passed earlier this week.

As a matter of fact, there are House leaders from the opposition side, my party and the third party, who actually offered to give unanimous consent to allow for amendments to go through on Bill 160 to correct the mistakes the government made, but the government refused. So here we are in this pretty pass. It's ridiculous and it brings disrepute — well, never mind to the government; they will find themselves accountable in 1999.

One of the things I thought we would have seen some action on — and perhaps I'm naïve; I will admit to a certain amount of naïveté; I'm a rookie in this House. But there was, I believe, this summer, an expression of judgement by some elements in Ontario on the government's agenda. That was the by-election that sent me to this House; and the member for Oriole and the member for Windsor-Riverside.

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Although the politically astute may look at who held the riding before, what the turnout was, who the candidates were, you can still distil from what was said in those elections, what was spoken about, the issues raised, whether the government was gaining any ground in terms of its agenda. Quite clearly, the number one issue was health care. What do we have to this date? All through my time here, we have had questions raised in the House — even though we had the distraction, and a very worthwhile distraction, of this enormous change to education — about health care, constantly, time after time, questions about the quality of health care, particularly since this government has taken money out of our health care system, millions of dollars out of our health care system. So are we beginning to see this government begin to understand, react, respond to the concerns being raised here? To this date we have not seen that at all. I find this personally very disappointing.

I know we're going to have time in the next four or five days to continue to raise issues, to try to hold the government accountable, but January and February will not be a wasteland as far as members of this House are concerned. Many of us will be working in our constituencies, talking to our friends, neighbours, the Kiwanis Club, the hospital support group, teachers, what have you, to talk about the issues of the day. I tell you, health care will be a major issue, education will be a major issue. What the government believes to be the major issues will not be top of mind for most voters, because they are concerned about the quality of their lives and the responsibility the government has to maintain it and enhance it with their precious tax dollars.

Mr Silipo: I'm pleased to have the chance to say a few words on this important motion to extend the sittings. We need to remind people who may be watching that this one of the peculiar things about the way in which this place operates. We have a regular calendar of sittings which usually has two sittings during the year: We go from the end of March to the end of June and then from the end of September to what would be the second week of December, in other words, tomorrow. That's the normal calendar. Of course, governments in the past and certainly this government now, in an incredibly startling way, have changed that calendar around as they have seen fit and as they've chosen to.

Mr Marchese: Discombobulated.

Mr Silipo: My friend from Fort York, in his usual colourful language, uses the word "discombobulated." I think that's a not inappropriate word at all to describe what this government has done. I'm sure he meant it not just in terms of the House calendar but was in fact referring to what this government has done as a whole and what it is doing.

I want to talk a little about that. I want to come back to what has happened this year. Because we are on the eve of the holiday season, one would think we need to keep that in mind and perhaps temper our comments a little bit, but

that's a question of individual choice and style and approach.

What we are doing here now is debating for the second day — "day" in terms of the calendar of this House, in terms of how a session of this House is seen — whether we should sit an additional week, into next week.

People might say: "What's the big deal? If you've got stuff to do, you should sit there and finish it. Then you can take a couple of weeks off for the Christmas holidays, and then committees can start to meet during the break." Usually, when the House doesn't sit, there is this perception out there that MPPs simply don't do very much. It's important that we remind people that in fact most of us are out there in our communities and we get a chance to talk to our constituents to a greater degree than we do when the House is sitting, but also committees sit during that time.

I don't know what the committee schedule is going to be during this particular session. I note that there isn't a whole pile of bills the government is sending out to committee during this break. There was one earlier today that the government wanted to pass from second reading directly to third reading, Bill 164, but we on this side of the House, particularly many of us in the New Democratic Party caucus, stood up, as is our right to do, and with 12 members in this House standing in their place, we were able to say, "No, that bill should go to committee, because there are important things in that bill that we think need to be discussed and need to have the opportunity to debate in committee."

I welcome my friend from Nepean here as he joins us.

Why did we do that? Because, as I said, the content of that bill was so important. Also, when we reflect on what has happened over this past year — I keep coming back to this past year because it has been particularly unusual, not just in terms of how it affects the House calendar but in how it has affected and how it is going to affect people in the province, not just in the months to come but in the years to come.

When we reflect back on the experience of this past year, when we look at what that particular bill, Bill 164, does — yes, Bill 164 has some useful tax credits in it. It's interesting, though, that the government thought they were so important that it waited until basically the eve of the House breaking before it even introduced the bill, but we'll leave that aside. We want to have a chance to discuss some of the other more important pieces in the bill, including, for example, what will or will not municipalities be able to say in the property tax bills that are also covered by Bill 164?

We want to take a look at those issues, hopefully through committee, although we understand that the rules of this House are such that the government can use its majority if it chooses to, take us through another day or so of debate and probably impose its will and bypass the committee, as it has done on occasion. But we would hope that when they reflect upon the usefulness of sending bills as major as that to committee, they will agree that what we did today was a wise step. They know it's in the public interest, because whenever a bill of that magnitude has

gone out to committee, what have we found? Whether it was Bill 103, the megacity bill, whether it was Bill 152, the download bill, whether it was Bill 160, the major education bill, what has happened on any of those major bills and many others I could cite is that through the process of committee an incredible number of amendments has been passed.

Interjection.

Mr Silipo: My friend from Nepean wants me to talk about things like tax credits to create jobs, and I'll get to those. But I have to say I find it interesting that he had 20 minutes to speak on this issue and he sat down after 10 minutes. I even sent for some water for him so he could continue, and he didn't take his full time. Now he wants me to finish his speech for him. I'm a fairminded person and I try to look at things in a very objective way, but as objective as I am, I'm sure cannot do justice to the approach the member for Nepean would have taken in terms of Bill 164. If after I am finished he would like to seek unanimous consent to complete his time, I'd be happy to support him and I believe my colleagues would as well. It's up to the government members.

But I was saying that whenever a bill of any major significance has gone out to committee, Speaker — and you know this as well as I, better than I, because you have to deal with these issues as the arbiter of the various disputes we go through, procedurally and otherwise — what has happened is that those bills have come back with significant amendments. That shows us very clearly that the government has recognized that there were things in each of those bills that were wrong and needed to be changed. In fact, when we have the opportunity through committee to take a look at those bills, particularly when we give the opportunity to the public to have useful input, not just to go through the sham of a couple of days of hearings but to actually listen to what people have to say, we usually end up with better legislation, whether we agree with it or not. I can't remember a bill that's gone through that — oh, I guess there was one that changed the name of a township the other day that went through that I supported.

Mr Baird: The social contract.

Mr Silipo: No, I'm talking about bills I've supported during the life of this government. Creighton-Davies: We supported that. My colleague from Nickel Belt brought it forward, and others, the members from the Sudbury area, supported it. We said, "That's a good idea," and we did that. There was also another bill, I believe introduced by the member for Scarborough East, that dealt with the Princess Margaret Hospital, which we also supported. On things like that, which are important and can be dealt with relatively quickly, there usually is a good, generous spirit of trying to do that.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Member for Nepean, I wonder if you'd find a different seat.

Mr Silipo: He's not bothering me, Speaker, but I'll leave that to your judgement.

When those major bills have gone out to committee, the experience inevitably has been that if the government is

even half listening, what comes back to this House is a bill that's actually more workable. When they have chosen not to listen, the government comes back with bills to amend previous bills.

Mr Marchese: More incompetence.

Mr Silipo: That shows, as my colleague the member for Fort York points out, the incompetence that that been increasingly a part of this government.

Take a look at what has happened this year. This House has sat twice, probably three times the normal length. I don't say that to complain about the time I've been here. I've actually found it quite useful — frustrating, as much as anybody else, expressing the frustration out there among the constituents in my riding of Dovercourt and of many across the province; frustrating because the government generally has not listened to the goodwill expressed by the people of the province. I'm not complaining about being here, because that's part of my job.

The point I'm making is we have sat in this House three times as much as normal sittings in this House during a calendar year, and still, at the end of that process we have the government having to bring forward another motion to say, "We have to sit another week because there are still a few things we haven't done." And what are those things?

Hon Turnbull: It must be the week you took off the calendar when you were the government.

Mr Silipo: Oh, come on. The week we took off when we were the government? I say to the government whip, what has that got to do with anything? You agreed to that week being removed from the calendar. There was all-party agreement that the House calendar would be modified to that effect, so let's not use that. If we're going to be fair, let's be fair about it.

The point is that the government whip knows as well as you know and as well as I know, Speaker, that as we've been sitting here evening after evening, we have more than made up for any other time we haven't sat, because every evening we are here counts as an additional sitting day. But I don't want to get into this as a complaint about how long we're sitting. That's not the point. The point is that this government, even with all this time they've had, even with all the time they have forced in terms of discussion in this House, they still have not been able to manage their agenda, have not been able to put through all the different bills they wanted to.

A government that has become the epitome of centralism, that has put powers so clearly in the hands of the Premier's office, that has so centralized the decision-making process, you would think would be able to manage its way through the House calendar.

We're here, and at some point we presume this motion will pass. We will sit another week. We will deal with whatever business needs to be dealt with. After all, it's up to the government to decide what business it wants to call, what business is so important, what particular bills it wants to get passed in the remaining time we have. We will deal with those.

But we will do so in such a way that we'll continue to try to do our job, as we have tried throughout this whole

incredible year, from the very beginning of January, when they deemed that spring began in January instead of March and had us here to begin the process of putting a series of bills through so they could embark upon their overarching policy of pushing down on to the property tax base the cost of many of the services that are now paid for as they should be, at the provincial level, through the income taxes and the other taxes collected at the provincial level.

I am not surprised to see the government members still choose not to believe that that is in fact what they have done throughout this year. I know that many of them have bought the line that Premier Harris and the three or four people around him who are masterminding and driving this agenda have put forward, because they have done a good job of selling it to their caucus and their caucus has been trying very hard to sell this notion out there.

But we will see over the next three to six months the real impact of the download. In my own community of Dovercourt, and I know it's the same in Fort York and I suspect it's going to be much the same in the Welland area —

Mr Kormos: If not worse.

Mr Silipo: — if not worse, we're going to see residence after residence, family after family, end up with huge tax bills. Will that be because municipalities are going to drive taxes up? No, because municipalities generally are going to do whatever they can to keep taxes down. Nobody, in this climate, wants to raise taxes. It's not going to come because municipalities are going to go out there and say, "We're going to raise your property taxes." But municipalities are going to be in a really difficult position. They're going to have to make some real choices.

When all the things are balanced out, we will not see an even trade, as the Premier has promised. We will not see the costs being pushed down versus the costs being brought back up to the provincial level equalize out. Maybe in some sort of balance sheet way that might be the case, because at some point they're going to have to pretend that's the case, are going to have to show somehow somewhere on the books that's the case, but in practical reality that's not going to be the case.

When I look at my own constituency of Dovercourt, when I look at the average family in a riding like that, a very healthily mixed riding in terms of the makeup both ethnically and income-wise, but still very much a working-class riding, with people who if fortunate enough to have a job in this economy consider themselves to be fortunate, and those who are not; an incredible mix of senior citizens; many injured workers; people on fixed incomes. Do you know what they're going to be facing? They're going to be facing user fees, they're going to be facing increases in taxes. That's going to be compounded in an area like that in the city of Toronto by this whole notion of market value assessment, or AVA, as the government wants to call it, actual value assessment.

We are going to see people's property taxes go up. I want to tell you, I'm going to be very clear with my con-

stituents, as I have been so far, in terms of saying where that responsibility lies. It lies at the feet of Mike Harris. It lies at the feet of Al Leach. It lies at the feet of every Conservative member who has chosen, for whatever reason, to follow that line that Mike Harris has imposed or convinced them of. They will have to deal with that. They will have to take the responsibility for that.

It may very well be that in the whole experience we've gone through, government members, as we leave this place, some time towards the end of next week I suspect, will on the one hand be relieved to have a bit of time off from here and on the other hand feel that all in all they survived more or less unscathed. But I have to tell you, if that's the way people are going away, if they feel that because they may still be up there in the polls, somehow they're going to make their way through this next year, then I think they have miscalculated, because as horrible as the impact of the various cuts have been so far, we have yet to see the full impact of the download in areas like the city of Toronto, in areas like my own constituency of Dovercourt, mixed in with the whole question of market value reassessment being imposed as part of that package.

2020

When all of that is said and done, if you think the Mike Harris revolution has been significant, wait until you see the real revolution that's going to start, because there is nothing like people getting their property tax bill and being able to look at it and say, "I thought that Mike Harris said that my taxes were either going to go down or they were at least not going to go up." What they're going to see instead is big increases if there is any hope at all of even the same level of quality of services being maintained in any kind of similar way to what exists now.

I don't envy the job of the new mega-council here in Toronto as I certainly don't envy the job that every council across this province is going to have to undertake over the next six months particularly. I think, to be fair to them, they will try to do their best to maintain that very finite balance between keeping taxes down and maintaining services, but the sheer reality is they won't be able to do both.

They won't be able to do both, and at the end of the day we're going to see the impact of cuts in our school system. We're going to see a school system that's going to feel again in a big way the underfunding that will come as another series of major cuts are made, whether they're \$700 million, as we finally got the Premier to admit, or whether it's going to be some other bigger number than that, as we fear, or perhaps even a slightly smaller number, as they try to readjust the figure. But there will be.

What I say to people who may be watching this is that the fight needs to go on. We will continue to raise these voices, and one of the ways in which that can be done is through the referendum process, through the referendum campaign that we have launched on Bill 160. We believe that that's a fundamental way of having 700,000 people across the province sign that petition so that we can say that the citizens of the province, Mike Harris, want you to

hold a referendum on Bill 160 and to be held accountable for the actions that you've taken.

Ms Annamarie Castrilli (Downsview): I have been listening very attentively this evening to some very thoughtful comments on this side of the House, and it strikes me that this motion, coming as it does in the mid-term of this government's mandate, gives us an opportunity to reflect on what has transpired so far and to assess the government and its performance. All of us were elected to this House to represent the interests of our constituents. We all arrived with a great deal of energy to do just that, and I think most of us have done that to the best of our ability.

What has happened in this place, interestingly enough, is that it has very clearly demonstrated the difference between the parties, which is a difference of substance. It's a difference of ideology. It's a difference of process. It's almost a difference of principle. I'd like you to consider tonight what this government is about, how it is perceived by the people and what in fact it has accomplished in the last two years. I think it's fair to say that the perception out there is that this government has centralized power to an extent unknown in the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker: Order. There are some long-distance conversations and if you have to have them, please leave the chamber. We owe our attention to the member for Downsview.

Ms Castrilli: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. You are very kind. I'm not sure my thoughts are quite deserving of so much attention.

Nevertheless, this is a government that was elected on a mandate to make government smaller, to make bureaucracy leaner and more efficient. What we find, two and a half years later, is a government that has gone mad, a government that has grown to enormous size. You can see that through the various pieces of legislation that they've enacted and the kinds of powers that they've given unto themselves, that they've taken away from the Legislature, that they've taken away from tribunals and that they've concentrated behind closed doors of the cabinet.

This is also a government that presumed to be giving a voice to people, yet what you see in the record of the government is in fact a government that has gone to great lengths to make the process more difficult for people to access; to make the rules more undemocratic and unfair; to limit debate at every turn; to ensure that the ordinary individual has very little to say about its policies.

If they do manage to say something, then they will be labelled a special interest group. It's what happened to the doctors and the nurses and the police and the firefighters and the teachers, and the list goes on and on. Anyone who has not agreed with this government, anyone who has dared to raise their voice, has been determined by this government to be a special interest group. Oddly enough, I think if you add all the special interest groups, you have the overwhelming majority of Ontarians, and still they do not get the message.

This is a government, after all, that chose to go to court and argue that they had a royal prerogative to do as they wished because they had a majority. Outrageous. The court found in that particular instance that their claim was bogus, that a democratically elected government cannot rely on the royal prerogative. I would remind you, Speaker, that in faraway England, when the monarchs did in fact try that they tended to lose their heads, and so it will be with this government in the fullness of time.

Let me just take you through some of the legislation that leads Ontarians to the conclusions I have just set out for you.

I think the most notorious example of all was Bill 26. You may remember some two years ago we were in this Legislature filibustering against what appeared to be, and since then has been demonstrated to be, a signature piece of this government, a bill which, under the guise of trying to deal with fiscal matters, took powers away and into the cabinet.

The opposition at the time said: "We understand. You're a government that was elected to deal with the fiscal reality. You're a government that has a particular attention to bring to the matter of fiscal reality. We understand that you have issues that you want to deal with quickly. So what we will do for you is we will agree to sever those matters that deal with the fiscal situation and leave the others for debate. We will deal with the fiscal matters quickly and the others we won't subject to debate." The government responded, "No, it's all or nothing."

When you look at that bill, it's really very instructive. You find that, in particular, the Minister of Health is given unprecedented powers, unparalleled powers, the kinds of powers that have been offered to ministers of health before who have refused them because they bordered on the undemocratic: the power to close hospitals; the power to take over boards of hospitals; the power to determine what information would be released and what would be kept private; the power to take over the entire medical establishment if they so chose. All by regulation, none of it subjected to public scrutiny, none of it subjected to debate.

We were shocked. I think all of Ontario was shocked that a government would come in and so clearly flout the rules of democracy, the rules of convention, so we staged a filibuster to draw attention to the fact that this bill was unprecedented, unparalleled and unconscionable.

Since then, I'd like to report that the government learned a lesson as people demonstrated against that bill and as we indicated our opposition to it. But they boldly went on. They went on to Bill 103 to amalgamate the six cities of Toronto and surrounding Toronto into one city. The people said: "No, we don't like this. We want to be consulted. We want to talk about it. We have distinct identities that we want to protect. We feel that we have something to contribute separately. We feel that there are no efficiencies to be gained by amalgamation."

And you know what? The experts agreed with them. Not one expert on amalgamation said that this was a good idea. Not one of them said that this would in fact save

money. Not one of them said it would be more efficient. Eventually even the government's friends began to be very concerned. The metropolitan board of trade said: "These arguments make sense. Maybe it won't be so efficient. Maybe you should really look at this." Still they didn't listen.

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Then the people held a referendum in all of the six cities affected by Bill 103, and the overwhelming majority of people said no, it was a bad idea. The government still didn't listen. It went on and amalgamated the cities nevertheless.

Then it was the turn of the schools. Having dealt with health, having dealt with municipalities in part, we then moved to Bill 104. Bill 104 sought to amalgamate school boards. It didn't sound too bad in principle: Reduce the number of school boards, reduce the number of trustees. There had been some discussion in the public about those and I think reasonable people would agree that there could be some changes. But I ask you what sense it makes to have school boards in Ontario that are the size of France, with virtually little representation from trustees — two trustees in such a huge area.

I ask you what sense it makes to take away the power from the local level to make decisions? We had hearings across the province with respect to Bill 104 and the overwhelming majority of people who came before us, whether they were students or parents or trustees or teachers, all said: "This is not a good idea. This hasn't been well thought out. You should consider such and such amendments." Again the government said, "We know what we're doing. We need to take control of the educational pot," and they didn't listen.

Then we moved on to Bill 152, which of course was the flip side of Bill 103. What the metropolitan board of trade was saying to the government is: "Yes, you amalgamate, but then you're going to download services. We fear that will be too much for the municipalities, that they will not be able to handle the services and the costs that you will impose on them." Bill 152 did just that. Bill 152 brought a whole lot of services on to the municipalities which they had neither the money nor the expertise to deal with.

In my own city of North York, it was estimated that just the upkeep of the social housing that would be dumped on the city would cost us \$100 million a year. That pattern is repeated all across the province as you look at social services, social housing, ambulance, roads and the myriad of other services that were, without any meaningful consultation, dropped on to the municipalities.

Lo and behold, even AMO, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, said: "Slow down. We're not sure this is what we agreed to when we elected you. We're not at all sure this is a good deal for the municipalities. We don't know that we have the tools to be able to deal with what you have given us. We don't know that we can do it without raising taxes."

Yet we've received assurances in this House that that absolutely would not happen, that there would be no tax increases. Ask yourself how that can be. Ask yourself how

you can dump so much more on the municipalities and expect them to maintain the same level of service and not raise taxes. No reasonable commonsense approach to this issue leads you to the conclusion that Bill 152 will be revenue-neutral, that it will have no effect on the municipalities, that services will continue unabated, that municipalities will flourish and that taxes will not increase. The government didn't listen and the government proceeded.

Then came Bill 160. Bill 160 I think was when the majority of people truly understood the agenda of this government and the way that it does business. Bill 160, a 234-page piece of legislation purportedly about education, mentions education just twice in the title and nevermore in the body of the legislation. The entire legislation is about power, about money and about concentrating that power and the decision-making power about money in the Minister of Education. Bill 160 is possibly the most undemocratic piece of legislation that we have ever passed in Ontario.

Quite frankly, the worry out there is that having done that, there's very little need of any further public debates on education from here on in, because consider that it is the Minister of Education who will have power to determine what taxes will be, what will be taught, who will teach it. It doesn't necessarily have to be a qualified teacher, if the minister so chooses. The bill will allow the minister to determine whether a school should be sold, whether a board of the school is functioning, whether that board should be taken over, whether principals and vice-principals should remain as part of the federation of teachers, and on it goes.

Mr Bill Murdoch (Grey-Owen Sound): That's already been decided.

Ms Castrilli: My friend says it's already been decided. Exactly, by Bill 160. That's precisely what we're talking about. I'm so glad you're listening.

I invite the member opposite to read the legislation, because it's really quite instructive. I don't believe you understand the scope of powers that you have given to the Minister of Education without quibble. You have already seen what the reaction is. There have been demonstrations throughout, there have been young children who have come here to say that this is bad legislation. There have been parents, there have been trustees, there have been teachers, there have been school boards. There have been demonstrations in this chamber and outside. There have been picket lines. There have been demonstrations in virtually every city in the province. Still the government insists on going on and still the government does not listen.

During all this the government thought: "There's too much opposition to the plan that we have in mind. There's too much opposition to the legislation that we want to put in place. Therefore, we also need to try and curtail debate as much as possible."

I won't talk about the kinds of mistakes that were made very early on, trying to curtail demonstrations of ordinary people, who were arrested when they tried to get into the chamber, but I will refer to the rules of this House, which

have been so curtailed and so horrendous as to abridge the privileges of members of this House to be able to adequately debate the complex legislation that comes before us at breakneck speed.

On top of it all, not only has the government managed to limit the amount of debate, not only has it managed to double a sessional day by having two sessional days in one calendar day, but the government continues by regularly invoking time allocation motions. A time allocation motion, as you know, is a motion which limits even further the amount of time that we can debate in this chamber, and it has been ruled as a legitimate abridgement of a member's privilege.

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But I ask you to consider, when you have a time allocation motion that so abridges the ability to debate, whether that doesn't destroy the privilege altogether. When you have a situation where you can only spend an hour to debate particular amendments, how is that meaningful? How can you bring thoughtful intelligence to bear on the issue? How can you make reasoned decisions? How do you know that you're making just decisions if you don't hear all parties and all sides?

These are the hallmarks of this government. This is a government, as I have indicated before, that has argued it has a royal prerogative simply because it has a majority, and this is a government that behaves as though it is a monarchy. But it is a monarchy subject to the people nevertheless, and all of those people who have spoken out on all of that legislation and other legislation I've not had the time to mention here today will eventually have their say.

If you want some kind of sense about what people are saying about this government, it is not only that it's going too fast, too far, but that it lacks thoughtfulness, that it has gone way beyond the bounds of what they were elected to do.

If this government were to be given a report card now — and my friend from Ottawa West has already mentioned the by-elections which have already spoken as to this government — if we look at democratic process, there's no question that the people of Ontario would give this government a resounding F. If you look at their ability to consult, again you have a very resounding F. If you look at their interest in equity issues, in justice issues, in equality issues, I think F is too generous for this government. If you look at their fiscal responsibility, again you have an F, because this is a government that is determined that in spite of all that's going on, in spite of all the cutbacks that they are forcing on ordinary people, they are taking \$5 billion and giving it to some of the wealthiest people in this province.

There is no corporation in the world that would give money away to its shareholders when it was trying to fight a debt. Let's not believe that they're doing this all in order to be fiscally responsible, because quite frankly that's not what this government is about.

I thank you, Mr Speaker, for the opportunity to comment on the performance of this government.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): It's with a certain amount of trepidation that I get an opportunity to speak on this motion, because what we're debating here is a House calendar motion on the part of the Conservation government and I think we need to put into context why it is that we're dealing with a House calendar motion.

For people who are watching or wondering what this is all about, the government of Ontario wants to pass a bunch of bills. The government, quite frankly, in this particular fall session has been pretty incompetent about how they've run things in the House and how they've introduced bills in the House and been dealing with things, so they find themselves in the unfortunate position of having to put in place a House calendar motion that will allow the House to sit later hours next week.

Now, I don't complain. As far as I'm concerned we can sit here 24 hours a day. That's what we get paid to do, that's what we come to Queen's Park for. But I think you have to ask yourself the question, why does the government find itself in the position that it is, especially when they introduced the rules of the House that they did last August?

Members in this assembly would know, as a lot of people in the public know, that the government last August introduced rules in the House that changed the way our standing orders work so that they're able to change how bills pass through this House, as compared to what it was, let's say, six months ago. In the past, if the government decided to introduce a bill, it didn't matter if it was Bill Davis's government, Frank Miller's government, David Peterson or Bob Rae, or even Mike Harris when he was first elected in 1995, you had to go through a process. It had something to do with what we call democracy.

This particular government says: "Listen, democracy when it comes to us is a foreign word and we don't understand what it means. Therefore we're going to do away with the ideas of democracy." So they introduced ideas and principles within the standing orders, rules are what they really are, that allow them to do all kinds of stuff, like on Monday morning come into the House, introduce a bill and have it passed into third reading by Wednesday.

Then the government has the audacity to come into this House two weeks before the end of the session in December and introduce a House calendar motion that allows them to sit until midnight every night of the week, or actually two nights next week, so that they're able to have the time to fix the mistakes they've made over the past little while.

Let's take a look at some of the things they mixed up. Members of this assembly would know — a bunch of people came to visit Queen's Park not too long ago, as a matter of fact this morning — but do you remember what the Minister of Agriculture, Noble Villeneuve, did today? He went out to the farming community of Ontario and said: "Come down to Queen's Park. I'm going to introduce an important bill for the agricultural community of Ontario." He invited all of the agricultural community down here and said: "I've got pull, I've got weight, I know how to do things. I've got a bill that's good for the

agricultural community." He wanted to put in place a Milk Amendment Act, something that we would have supported.

What happened? The minister fouled up. Instead of dealing with the Milk Amendment Act, we're here dealing now with this particular House calendar motion because the government fouled up. What's really amazing is that the minister invited them down and hadn't even talked to the government House leader to assure himself that his Milk Amendment Act would be debated. You've got to say to yourself, what is it with these people? They're not able, with the new rules of the House, to pass bills through the House, which should take a lot more time than they do now so we could have some sane debate and make sure that the public is consulted whenever we pass bills.

What's even more amazing is that the Minister of Agriculture isn't talking to his own House leader. He goes to the agriculture community and says: "Come down to Queen's Park. View me as I do my job as the Minister of Agriculture representing the people of Ontario. We want to deal with the Milk Amendment Act." He didn't even have the courtesy to talk to the House leader because, obviously, the House leader had other ideas. He wanted to debate this House calendar motion.

On behalf of the Legislature of Ontario and on behalf of the New Democratic Party, and on behalf of the Minister of Agriculture, I would like to apologize to the agricultural community that came here today to hear this very important debate that should have taken place tonight. Did the Minister of Agriculture come into the House and make some kind of public statement and say, "Oops, I goofed, I blundered"? No. Again, they don't want to take responsibility for anything they do. I can't say the member is not in the House, because that would be against the standing orders. I can't say the Minister of Agriculture isn't here tonight to talk about what he did when he invited all of the agricultural community to come here. I know it's against the standing orders, so I won't mention that he's not here.

Another blunder on the part of the government: The government came here with Bill 164 a couple of weeks ago. I'm just trying to show a pattern here when it comes to this government. They're really incompetent. Can you imagine what they would have said about Bill Davis, David Peterson, Frank Miller or Bob Rae if they had had to come to the House to introduce a bill to amend a bill that had just recently been passed in the House? They would have said, "My Lord, if you can't figure out how to run the House, why are you Premier?"

No, Mike Harris is really smart. Normie Sterling, the member for Ottawa whatever, he's really smart too. They know how to figure these things out. Why did they bring in Bill 164? They brought in Bill 164 because they blundered. They had to amend Bill 149, the assessment act, because they made mistakes in Bill 149 and they had passed that bill just recently. Instead of saying, "We'll take our time, we'll send it to committee, we'll make the amendments that are necessary to get it right," they had to rush Bill 149 through the new rules process. They speedily passed Bill 149 through the House and they got it wrong,

so they needed to bring in Bill 164 — Bills 149 to 164 ain't a lot of numbers; it tells you how recent Bill 149 was — to amend Bill 149 because they got it wrong.

But Bill 164 didn't just amend Bill 149; it amended Bill 160, a bill that we voted on not more than two weeks ago, or a week and a half ago. The government with great fanfare and insults to the teaching profession and trustees of this province brought in Bill 160 to destroy our system of public education and they couldn't even get their own bill right. Not that I agree with Bill 160; I think it's a terrible piece of legislation, but the least they can do is get it right. But no, they had to come back with Bill 164 and make amendments to Bill 160 because they passed Bill 160 through the House in record time under the new rules process. What happened? Here the government again has blundered, another incompetence, another time that the government demonstrated itself as not being able to pass its own bill through the House. But it doesn't end there.

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Yesterday, budget bill number 3; the government introduced budget bill number 3. The bill is this thick, about 200 pages thick. They introduce the bill into the House, one of their budget measures, and then they say, "We need to get this passed by January 1." Where have you guys been for the last six months? You introduced the bill last spring.

Mr Bradley: Changing the rules.

Mr Bisson: Exactly, that's the point I'm getting at. It's because the government members and the House leader of the time were busy getting the House back in August to do what? To change the rules of the House and pass a bill lickety-split so they can get things right, so they can rule for democracy. They've now introduced budget bill number 3, it's about 200 pages thick and they want this House to deal with budget bill number 3 in a week and a half of House time. It's not even a week and a half. We've got Thursday to deal with it and four days next week and they wonder why we're coming in with a House calendar motion. It's because this government blundered again. Again the finance minister couldn't talk to the House leader and figure out how to get the legislation through.

It doesn't end there. I remember last summer; I couldn't believe this. My good friends Len Wood from Cochrane North, Tony Martin from Sault Ste Marie, Mr Silipo from Dovercourt and I were members of the Bob Rae government. I remember when we had to pass bills through the House and bring bills to committee our members used to go the House and to committee and pay attention to what went on. Do you remember what happened last summer with Bill 142, the bill that amends the social assistance act? The Tories were sleeping at committee. They fell asleep.

Thank God for the people of Ontario that they fell asleep: Because of that rest, working people who happen to be unemployed at this point and on welfare are now protected under the Employment Standards Act, because the Mike Harris government, the one that says, "We're fair, we're reasonable, we're trying to do things in a balanced way," was trying to take away the employment

standards protection of people in Ontario and that they would be on workfare. Luckily for us the Tories weren't paying attention and they fell asleep at committee and lost that particular part of the act. I think that's a good thing. I wish you would sleep more often. Unfortunately, I think it demonstrates just how this government is. They can't get it right. They blunder.

Tonight Bill 164, the very bill I talked about before — it's good thing you're in the chair, Mr Speaker. The government might have lost the bill. I'm glad you were in the chair because I wouldn't want to see the government lose the bill. That wouldn't be very nice.

Interjection.

Mr Bisson: Maybe we want them to lose the bill. What a good point. I'll tell you, this Mike Harris Conservative government goes on and on about, "We're good business managers, we're people who ran businesses before." What businesses did you run? Were you with Campeau? Who were you with? Were you with Bre-X? What businesses were you with? They were failed businesses, because you can't run this government. You can't get it straight. I'm telling you this government has got to start getting it right.

This government blunders to no end. We have to take a look at a very important document that I have in front of me now. This document is called the American College Dictionary. It's the dictionary the government gave us. It's a very tattered dictionary, I might add, because they don't believe in books. They burned most of them last week in a ritual they had. We found this book in the legislative library and it's called a dictionary. I want to go through the word "blunder" with you. I want people in the House and the people of Ontario to decide with me which of these particular definitions best describes what the government has done.

The word "blunder": "(1) a gross or stupid mistake." I want to know, is that what we would classify all of these examples as, a gross or stupid mistake? "(2) 'to move or act blindly, stupidly or without direction or steady guidance.'" Is it number two?

Mr Cullen: Bill 160.

Mr Bisson: That's Bill 160. I think that describes it very well. Number (3) under the word "blunder," b-l-u-n-d-e-r, for those of you on the other side of the House who want to know what the word is: "to make a gross or stupid mistake, especially through mental confusion."

Mr Cullen: Bill 26.

Mr Bisson: Hang on, "mental confusion," I have something here that refers to mental confusion. I want members of the House to tell me which MPP said the following comments. Listen to this. I want the members of the House to pay attention. We are supposed to be the people that represent the people of Ontario, and I want you to tell me (a) what party does this member belong to and (b) who is he? All right? Here's the quote: "The most crime-free era was when times were tough during the Depression. When times are tough, crime drops. So there is no relationship in my mind between poverty and crime." I want to know who said that. What party?

Interjection.

Mr Bisson: The Conservative Party, you're right. Very good. You've figured it out. And the member was? Jim Brown.

Mr Bradley: That's the Reform Party.

Mr Bisson: It's the same thing: Reform Party, Conservative Party, same thing. I think that either would be classified as number 3, "to make a gross or stupid mistake, especially through mental confusion," or it falls under 2, "to move or act blindly, stupidly or without direction or steady guidance." I think it's one of the two. I need a vote. Which one is it? But it doesn't end there. The Conservatives —

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): Let's have more poverty and less crime.

Mr Bisson: Oh, and more poverty and less crime, as the member for Sault Ste Marie says. Exactly. These are the people running the government, making comments like this, and it doesn't end there. I looked at the Toronto Sun, Wednesday, December 10. I want to show you the Sun. That is the bastion of Conservatism in Ontario. Who are these people on this picture? Well, we have pictures of Jim Brown, the same person who made the previous comment. We have Gerry Martiniuk and Bob Wood, all of them members of the Tory party —

Mr Len Wood (Cochrane North): Not related to me.

Mr Bisson: Not related to Len Wood. I've got to tell you, in no way related to Len Wood. Len Wood would never say this.

In the Toronto Sun, listen to this headline — no, I don't want to read the headline now. I want to read the comments and then the headline. It says, and listen to this, "I want to say to all the lawbreakers out there that people have had enough," Tory MPP Jim Brown said. 'And from now on, no more Mr Nice Guy.'"

Now listen to this part. "At the official launch of the Ontario Crime Control Commission yesterday, Tory MPP Bob Wood said, 'Police should stifle all crime, no matter how small.'" And what crimes are we talking about? Jaywalking. Oh, my God, throw them in jail. And guess what? Public urination. Oh my. The headline reads, "Mind Pees and Qs, Crime Czars Warn."

I can tell you what they did with the last czars and it wasn't pretty, and we wouldn't want people to do that with you. But I come back to what this dictionary says. When you see Conservatives like Mr Wood making the comment that he wants to get tough on crime by punishing people and throwing them in jail for littering, jaywalking and public urination — my Lord, he's going to get tough on crime. My Lord, he's got his priorities straight, that man.

Now, I want to go back to the dictionary. The dictionary says, "blunder: to bungle or botch" — I don't think that's the case. I think he knew what he was talking about — "to utter thoughtlessly or blurt out" — I think he's still blurting as he speaks. It comes down to "a gross or stupid mistake." Which one is it? Is it close?

Interjection.

Mr Bisson: Okay, "blurt out." Or "to move or act blindly, stupidly or without direction or steady guidance or to make a gross or stupid mistake especially through mental confusion." I think it is number 3. There is plenty of mental confusion within the Conservative caucus of Ontario. Why else would they turn around and say the most crime-free era was when times were tough during the Depression and when times are tough, crime drops?

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): They want a depression.

Mr Bisson: They want another depression; that's got to be what they're saying. I'm not joking. The sad part is, this is true. This is what one Tory MPP, Jim Brown, said, "There is no relationship in my mind between poverty and crime." I don't want Bob Wood —

Interjection.

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Mr Bisson: Oh my God, he agrees too. Jim Brown says, "There is no relationship in my mind between poverty and crime." I don't want to delve into this man's mind. It's scary, it's terrible. But in all seriousness, I think it demonstrates where this government is at. You have a gang of Reform-minded Tories who came to Queen's Park in June 1995. They are here to reform Ontario, to reform the laws of the province, to throw all the public urinators, the litterers and jaywalkers into jail.

This is a sad state of affairs. I always thought that Ontario was somewhat of a compassionate province. The Ontario that I grew up in was the Ontario that said, quite frankly, that all Ontarians have a place in our society that is important. Governments in the past, Conservative, Liberal and New Democrat, understood that in a caring, compassionate society, we have to have respect for each other; we have to understand that at the end of the day we have to be able to govern on behalf of all of the people of the province of Ontario.

I think this particular motion we have before us today demonstrates just at what point this government has lost. I repeat one more, when it comes to the word "blunder," there are five definitions. The definitions are "a gross or stupid mistake; to move or act blindly, stupidly or without direction or steady guidance; to make a gross or stupid mistake, especially through mental confusion; to bungle, botch; or to utter thoughtlessly or blurt out." In many cases, unfortunately, there is more than one member of the Tory caucus who fit all five of these definitions.

Mr Speaker, protect us from the evil of this government. We are in deep trouble.

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): It's always interesting to speak on the night of a Christmas party. I want to tell you, in speaking to this calendar motion this evening, that actually I favour the extension of time here. I favour us being here. I think there's much work to do, particularly because the government has not addressed a number of the issues that I find are terribly important in my own constituency.

We have for some time, for example, lobbied, worked in order that, in the community of Elliot Lake, we would have long-term-care beds. As people know, Elliot Lake is

a community that has been in transition, had made a phoenix-like rise from the devastation of losing about 4,000 very good industrial jobs in our mines and is now a retirement community. What that means, of course, is that the demographics of Elliot Lake have changed dramatically and that we have a population now that is more like the provincial average.

Before, the Elliot Lake of seven or eight years ago was a place where the average age was about 38, a very young community. Now, because in some ways it has imported its grandparents, it has become a community not unlike most communities across Ontario in terms of demographics. What it doesn't have is long-term-care beds and we've been trying to make this point with the Minister of Health for a long time. We have talked to your minister responsible for seniors about that. We have been attempting as a community, Mayor George Farkouh, Sister Sarah Quackenbush, Gil Contant from Huron Lodge, we have all been trying to make the point that long-term-care beds in Elliot Lake are a necessity. Here we are, coming towards the end of a session, and nothing has been realized in terms of dealing with those very significant issues for seniors in Elliot Lake.

I think you must understand over there that long-term-care beds in northern Ontario are in some ways more important. It's true, there are long-term-care beds available but they are available 60, 70 or 80 miles away. It is just not acceptable that we ask a senior to go to visit their spouse 60 or 70 miles away. We need those kinds of facilities right in Elliot Lake.

I want to talk about physicians and health care, because we have a problem with the number of physicians in the community of Elliot Lake. While it would not be described as a crisis, it is certainly a cause for concern. Many people are having problems at the moment getting themselves a family physician. We have lost a couple of physicians. Sister Sarah Quackenbush at the hospital and the mayor and his council and a whole host of people have been working very hard to recruit new physicians with some success, but it hasn't materialized that we have a sufficient complement of physicians in that community as of yet.

It is also a cause of concern that we have lost all our francophone physicians in Elliot Lake. With a sizeable French-speaking population there is a need for probably two bilingual physicians, which the Minister of Health has not done a great deal about. We look forward to the minister addressing that particular situation.

We've also had problems with people in the health care professions, whether it's physiotherapists or others.

When I'm in the constituency office, when our phones ring, those are the kinds of issues that we're hearing about that the government is just not addressing.

I want to talk a little bit about what's happening in — the government's acronym is CCACs, which really means home care, for people who don't understand the bureaucratic rattle of all these things. In that situation we're finding across the riding, regardless of community, whether we're looking at Manitoulin or Espanola or along

the North Shore, that home care is becoming stressed out. It is not able to meet the needs of people who are being discharged from hospitals quicker and sicker, as they say, or have a need for long-term care, more chronic type of care. As we attempt to meet the restrictions of great cuts in funding to our hospitals by trying to go to a more community-based care system, the government is just not investing resources within that community care system to provide the kind of adequate care our people need.

I also want to talk a little bit about what else isn't being addressed. Education in our communities is suffering. Members may remember that last week I raised an issue of adult education along the North Shore and in Elliot Lake. Surprisingly, astoundingly, of the 70 graduates of that particular program, Mr Speaker — and you'd be interested in this — when they started in adult education fully 85% of them, if I'm correct, were on some kind of public assistance, whether that was unemployment insurance or social assistance or workers' compensation. Following their graduation, only 10% of those people were on any kind of government support. That is an astounding record and one that I think the government would want to encourage.

But we're hearing that now, under the new funding models, very likely adult education will not be delivered along the North Shore. With that kind of success, I wonder why any government would not want to invest in its people so that they can be productive citizens in our communities, have fulfilling lives and contribute to the wellbeing of all of us. But that's what's going on. We have some tremendous success stories which the government now seems to want to dismiss.

During the Bill 160 debate and the ensuing protest, I talked to parents and educators across the constituency, visited a lot of the protest lines at the schools. I found what only could be described as a strong resolve but a profound sadness. The government's intent appears to be to destroy publicly funded education within this province; that's clear. I don't know that many of the Conservative members took the opportunity to actually go out to the protest lines to find out what people were saying, what the parents who were on the lines and teachers and others were saying. But you should have done it, because your characterization of this group of union bosses couldn't be further from the truth.

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I talked to the elementary school teachers, the grade 3 teachers, the kindergarten teachers. They were truly saddened that they felt they had to do what they were doing. I think we should applaud them for being out on the protest, because they understood this was about children, it was about education, it was about the future of the province. They understood very well what this is about, and they were quite willing to sacrifice their salaries and their time to be out in the snow and inclement weather trying to make a point with Mike Harris and this government, to say, "We just can't do that."

Here we are in this place. Supposedly tomorrow would be the last day of the calendar, I believe. At this juncture

we're seeing legislation still having to do with education in Bill 164, amending a bill that was just passed a week ago. We're seeing ourselves here with a number of issues not resolved to anyone's satisfaction. So I'm glad we're going to be around for another week. I'm hoping that early in the next year we can be back, because I think there are a number of issues that just are not being addressed here in Ontario.

We want to talk about the municipalities here for a minute. When we talk about municipalities, I'm not sure people really understand that what we're really talking about are the taxpayers. Those taxpayers happen to be the property taxpayers. I see that some of you over there might be interested in property tax.

Here's what the Association of Municipal Clerks and Treasurers says about the government's recent initiative: "The cumulative effect of Bills 106, 149, 160 and now 164 is that we no longer have a municipal property tax system. We have a provincial tax system administered by municipalities. The province controls the education tax, it determines classes and subclasses of land, it allocates tax ratios and transition ratios. And now it may determine what will go on the tax notice."

Mr Cullen: All by regulation.

Mr Michael Brown: Exactly. "All by regulation," my friend says.

This is not a radical group; this is the municipal clerks and treasurers. I want to read that again. It says, "The cumulative effect of Bill 106, 149, 160 and now 164 is that we no longer have a municipal property tax system.... We have a provincial tax system administered by municipalities." That's exactly what's going on.

What we have is a government that is taking total control of the municipalities, total control of school boards. It is all in the back room. It's not even responsible here, to the Legislature. Those decisions will be made by the whiz kids, Guy Giorno and his buddies in the back rooms. But the municipalities will have to now levy taxes over which they have virtually no control, and the government is betting that the electorate will not understand that the municipalities are just the group collecting the tax, that the real decisions are all being made here at Queen's Park, but Queen's Park does not want to take responsibility for those decisions. Interesting politics, and it's going to be interesting to see if you guys over there can get away with that: take total control, but all the responsibility is somewhere else. That's the smoke and mirrors we're seeing here today.

Interjection.

Mr Michael Brown: What was that?

Interjection.

Mr Michael Brown: Well, he is right. That's exactly what the clerk-treasurers are saying about what's going on in the municipalities. I guess the Conservative members don't think the clerk-treasurers' association of Ontario knows what's going on. That's what they say is going on in this province: "The province controls the education tax." It does. It "determines classes and subclasses of land, it allocates tax ratios and transition ratios, and now

it may determine what will go on the tax notice." That's what they said. I don't think there's much debating what that particular piece of legislation says.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Grey-Owen Sound, come to order.

Mr Michael Brown: I'm pleased to continue. I've obviously piqued some interest on the other side. That's good. It means that a few of them are awake.

I also want to talk about this huge income tax cut —

Laughter.

Mr Michael Brown: You're laughing — that is being seen by everyone in this province for what it is. The bond rating agencies, for example, call it risky and dangerous, when you have a huge deficit to begin with. That's where you start, with a huge deficit, and you add this decrease in income tax. You're going to try to buy some votes with it, but that's what it's about.

What's interesting is who's paying. It's the property taxpayer who's paying. You've shifted it down to the property tax. If you include the previous cuts of the social contract, you've cut about \$1 billion from education. You're going to cut another \$700 million from education, according to your deputy minister's contract. So who is going to save the money? Is it the property taxpayer who's going to save the \$1.7 billion? The answer is no. The best the government can do is feebly promise that this is going to be neutral, but \$1.7 billion would reduce your property taxes by at least 10% in this province, probably closer to 15% or 20%. That's what's going on. You don't seem to recognize what's going on, over on the other side. I don't think the agenda of this government has been particularly —

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order. I'd like to see everyone here with us until 9:30. Please be in order.

Mr Michael Brown: The government doesn't seem to want to have light shed upon what is really going on here these days. They don't want anybody to say what the real agenda is. The real agenda is to shift control into the back rooms at Queen's Park, to centralize power here at Queen's Park, to make sure that local officials have little or no input into what goes on. That is clearly the case. Bill after bill does that. It provides broad regulatory power that will not be reviewed by this Parliament. It provides that the decisions will not be made by local councils.

Disentanglement is a joke. I'd like the government to tell me what it is they've disentangled. They cannot find anything within this disentanglement, other than maybe giving sole control of ambulances to municipalities, which they never had before. That's about the only thing I can think of that isn't just as tangled or more entangled than it ever was.

I want to support this calendar motion, because we need to stay here and talk about these things. We need to be able to come before Parliament and bring these issues out day after day, hopefully so the government can understand that people in this province want to have some local input and authority, so they can choose their own destiny

rather than have it dictated from a faraway Queen's Park through the machinations of the ideologues in the Premier's office. That's what it's all about. I think that agenda is becoming quite clear to the people of Ontario. The people of Ontario understand that this is about big government, about mega-government — more expensive, less responsive to community needs.

2120

Mr Cullen: Less transparent.

Mr Michael Brown: My friend says, "Less transparent." This is completely opaque.

Mr Murdoch: Who is your friend, anyway?

Mr Michael Brown: Ottawa West, I believe.

We're proud to go forward here in the House trying to keep the government accountable. We look forward not only to sitting next week, but hopefully coming back early in the new year so we can hold the government accountable for its no doubt strange agenda as we go forward through January, February and March. I think that's what the people of Ontario expect of us; they expect us to be here. I want to be here. I want to keep this government accountable. We want to make sure that some accountability can be kept before the people of Ontario.

Mr Speaker, thank you very much for giving me this opportunity to bring my views before the Legislature and to wish the constituents in Algoma-Manitoulin a merry Christmas, in case I don't have another opportunity.

Mr Martin: I'm with the member for Algoma-Manitoulin: I think it's a good idea that we're here tonight speaking on these issues that are so important to the people of Ontario. More debate, more contribution, more input, more discussion about the agenda of this government has to shed some light on what exactly is going on and the impact it will have.

I'm only disappointed that the members of the government have chosen not to participate, because I and many others out there are anxious to hear more from you about why you think what you're doing is good for Ontario, because their experience is exactly the opposite. Their experience is that everything that you've done so far is take away, everything that you've done so far is destroy, decimate, wipe out, throw into turmoil and chaos all the very valuable and important public structures that we've put in place collectively to educate kids, to keep us all healthy and to provide safety nets for people in an economy that continues to be very volatile — everything you do.

It doesn't surprise me at all, because that's what we get in this House from the other side in these debates. We get written speeches that are always in line with the ideology of the day, that never speak directly to the question, that never say anything about the issue at hand and do not in any way answer some of the very important questions raised by us in the House on behalf of the constituents we represent.

To speak here tonight —

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member for Sault Ste Marie.

Mr Martin: Thank you. I don't know what that was all about.

The Acting Speaker: I'll just tell you what it was all about. It's one of the things I insist on, that I be able to see the person who is in debate. When I can't do that, I have to stop it so I can get that visual line. I not only want to be able to hear you, I want to be able to see you. I was just making sure I could do that.

Mr Martin: I appreciate that. At least there's one Conservative in this place who's interested in seeing and hearing what the opposition has to say on issues of importance to the people we represent. I truly appreciate that. I haven't felt that in the last two and a half years, but it's good to know, because none of you has taken the opportunity tonight to participate in the debate we have in front of us, to take the time.

I thought you changed the rules in this place, according to what I read and heard from you, so you might have more opportunity to participate, to speak on behalf of your constituents. The only conclusion I can come to is that what you're hearing from your constituents you don't want to bring back and share in this place, because it will be embarrassing to you, it will hurt you in some way politically, so you don't want to share. That's the only conclusion I can come to, the only reason I can think of that you wouldn't want to get up tonight and speak on this issue that allows you some latitude to talk about the agenda you're so proud to uphold and how it impacts on the people who live in your constituencies, the people who are affected by some of the changes you're making in the communities and towns and villages you represent.

However, I appreciate the extra time we get to stand and talk. It's interesting that the more I'm here — and that's why I'm supporting the move by the government to change the calendar so we can be here a week longer — the more I learn. I learned tonight from the member for Cochrane South in his speech — some of you will remember his speech —

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener): You learned something?

Mr Martin: Yes, I did. Actually, tonight for me the light finally went on. I could not for the life of me understand why this government is so hell-bent on creating poverty in this province; I could not understand why that was your agenda. I could not understand why the very first thing you did was to take 21.6% away from the incomes of the poorest and the most marginalized and the most vulnerable in our communities. Do you know why they don't have jobs? Have you ever asked yourself that question? Because the economy of this province and the economy of this country naturally provides for —

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order.

Mr Martin: I got a little carried away there. The members across were engaging me —

Interjection: It doesn't happen often.

Mr Martin: No, it doesn't happen often. You took 21.6% away from their incomes. Do you know what the result is? The result is a report that came out this past

week that says that the number of poor kids in Canada has doubled, and Ontario rates the worst in Canada. That's what you're doing: You're creating poverty for families and you're creating poverty for children.

Let's look today at an article in the Toronto Star: "Youth Left Struggling for Basics as Companies Enjoy the Boom Times." I wondered why you're doing this. I

wondered what the rationale was. Tonight I found out what we have over there —

The Acting Speaker: Order. It being nearly 9:30 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 10 am tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 2129.

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No. 260A

N° 260A

ISSN 1180-2987

Legislative Assembly of Ontario

First Session, 36th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Première session, 36^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Thursday 11 December 1997

Jeudi 11 décembre 1997

Speaker
Honourable Chris Stockwell

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Président
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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Published by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario



Service du Journal des débats
3330 Édifice Whitney ; 99, rue Wellesley ouest
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Téléphone, 416-325-7400 ; télécopieur, 416-325-7430
Publié par l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 11 December 1997

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 11 décembre 1997

*The House met at 1001.
Prayers.*

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

IPPERWASH PROVINCIAL PARK

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): I move that in the opinion of this House, since in September 1995 the public was told that in the incident involving the first nations occupying Ipperwash Provincial Park the first nations' claim of a burial ground had no validity; the OPP handled the situation with no political involvement; the government handled the situation like any other first nation land claim dispute; the first nations were heavily armed and opened fire on the OPP; the Premier gave no direction to his staff representing him at high-level meetings before the shooting of Dudley George; and the police had to lay 52 charges against the first nations people;

Since subsequent to the September 1995 incident the facts have confirmed that the provincial government had written evidence dating to 1937 of a burial ground on the site; the Ontario government asked the police to "remove the occupiers — ASAP"; the headline in the Sarnia paper the day of the shooting death of Dudley George said: "Queen's Park to Take Hard Line with Occupiers"; a court trial proved that the first nations had no firearms; the Premier told his executive assistant prior to the high-level meeting the day of the shooting, "out of the park — nothing else"; and the crown dropped 43 charges because there was "no reasonable prospect of conviction"; seven were found innocent, two are awaiting trial and an OPP officer has been convicted of criminal negligence causing death in the shooting incident;

Therefore, the government of Ontario should commit to holding a public inquiry into the events leading up to the shooting death of Dudley George at Ipperwash Provincial Park as soon as all legal impediments are cleared.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Pursuant to standing order 95(c)(i), the honourable member has 10 minutes for his presentation.

Mr Phillips: I want to make very clear that what we are calling for here is for the government of Ontario, for Premier Harris, to make a commitment to hold a public inquiry into this tragic affair and to hold that inquiry as soon as legally possible, as soon as any legal impediment is cleared. We are not asking to jeopardize any legal proceedings at all, but what we want is a clear commitment by the Premier that an inquiry will be held.

I talk often with the first nations people and what they tell me is: "Mike Harris will never, ever hold an inquiry. He is going to stonewall this thing, hoping that the public will grow tired of it, that the first nations will no longer be able to mount a campaign to hold it, and he just simply will stonewall it until some time in the future and never call an inquiry."

What we need today is a commitment to hold that inquiry. Premier Harris has been asked many times to do it and all of us know his answer. He will never, ever make that commitment.

Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming): Shame.

Mr Phillips: It is a shame.

That's what the resolution calls for. I understand any debate around, "Well, we've got to wait until the court proceedings are all done before we start an inquiry," but you can make that commitment today.

Why should you make that commitment? Why should we make that commitment? I will just say that our first nations have been dealt a serious injustice here. Remember these things. They went into that park at the end of Labour Day in 1995, entered the park, and said, "We're going in there because there is a sacred native burial ground." Mike Harris has said all along, "There's no evidence of that, there's no burial ground there." We find there was evidence probably less than 200 yards from where we're sitting here, in the government files, clear evidence of a native burial ground there.

As a matter of fact, there was communication from the federal government to the provincial government. I'll quote from that communication. This is from 1937: "On the 13th of this month, a council of Kettle and Stoney Point bands passed a resolution requesting this department to bring the matter to your attention with a view to having this old Indian burial ground preserved intact and properly fenced." Dating back to 1937 the federal government, as the province was taking over responsibility for this, sent a communication saying the band leaders are concerned about the burial ground, requesting from the government fencing of the burial ground.

We were told there was no evidence of a burial ground. There was. As a matter of fact, the crown, the government, had to go into court and drop 43 charges they'd laid. Why? Because the communications confirmed that "the old Indian cemetery," that's their language, "which...is located within the territory now being developed as a park." "Further, it has been clearly indicated by the Provincial Division judges at pre-trials that this defence will succeed in all instances.... Accordingly, this 'colour

of right' defence is of sufficient significance that the crown concludes that there is no reasonable prospect of conviction. The crown therefore must withdraw all forcible detainer charges."

What that says is the crown dropped those charges because it had in its own possession evidence of a burial ground. We were told that the reason for the shooting death was that the first nations opened fire on our OPP. We subsequently find from the trial that the judge, in looking at the evidence where the police had said they had to return fire, the judge indicated, and this is directly from the trial, where initially what we had been told was that the first nations opened fire — that's what precipitated this — here's what the judge said: "I find that (Dudley) George did not have any firearms on his person when he was shot...[T]he story of the rifle and the muzzle flash was concocted ex post facto in an ill-fated attempt to disguise the fact that an unarmed man had been shot."

That's the second reason why we need an inquiry. The public had been told: "Well, we were facing an armed band of first nations who opened fire. What do you expect?" The judge, a respected judge, after a significant trial, reached the conclusion that the story of that was concocted ex post facto in an ill-fated attempt to disguise the fact that an unarmed man had been shot.

1010

Premier Harris was asked, "Did you give any instructions to your executive assistant before she went to a high-level meeting to represent you?" This meeting was held the morning of the shooting. The morning of the shooting, again here at Queen's Park, a high-level meeting was held. The Premier's personal executive assistant was there. A senior OPP officer was at that meeting. The meeting took place in the morning. The senior OPP officer, we know from records, was in phone communication with the command post after that meeting. The Premier, when asked, "Did you give any directions to your executive assistant before she went to that meeting?" gave a one-word answer, "None."

We then find out from the minutes of that meeting, which we've been able to obtain under freedom of information — and these are them. The public probably can't see this, but remember the Premier said, "I gave no instructions to my executive assistant." These are the minutes from that meeting: "D. Hutton — Premier last night" — meaning she was talking to the Premier last night — "'out of the park — nothing else.'" We were told that the police were given no instructions, the fourth point.

We find that again in the minutes of that committee meeting, attended by, among others, I believe, one of the MPPs in the room. At that meeting the minutes said — yes, one of our Conservative MPPs was at that meeting, we see from the minutes. Remember again that the Premier said the police were given no instructions. This is what the minutes say: "Police have been asked to remove the occupiers from the park."

The previous minutes say, "The province will take steps to remove the occupiers — ASAP." Again, the Premier says there was absolutely no direction given to

the police and we find evidence to the contrary. The commissioner said, "I took no tactical directions from the government. I do, however, obviously take strategic direction." It's clear to me that the government gave this strategic direction, and the minutes would confirm that.

The reason this is so important, I think, a test of a government is how it deals with its first nations. As I talk to the first nations, they tell me they have no trust in this government. They tell me Mike Harris will never commit to an inquiry, and "We will not be dealt justice."

As you go through the things that we were told and then the facts as they came out: We were told, no burial ground; there was a burial ground. We were told that the first nations opened fire; we found out that an unarmed, innocent man was shot. We were told that the government had no involvement in this; we find the minutes different than that. We were told the Premier said he gave no instructions to his executive assistant; we find that the minutes of that differ. We were told that this was dealt with as any other first nations dispute, and the morning of the shooting, that morning the headline in the Sarnia paper: "Queen's Park to Take Hard Line with Occupiers." Surely this demands a commitment to a public inquiry.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I rise to support the resolution, recognizing that my leader, Howard Hampton, introduced a resolution for debate in this House requesting a public inquiry previously and the government voted it down. I hope that the government members will rethink their position and recognize that in this resolution the member for Scarborough-Agincourt is suggesting that a commitment be made — a commitment — that an inquiry will be held when all legal impediments are removed. The excuse that there are matters still before the courts should not play a role in how members vote on this resolution since it is not calling on the government to hold an inquiry prior to the courts' dealing with whatever charges have been laid and not yet dealt with.

I recognize that the killing of Dudley George is a blemish on the history of this province, a blemish on the history of Canada. It's an international disgrace. The stonewalling by the government to prevent the truth coming out — that's the only way it can be described — compounds that blemish and hurts the reputation of this province and Canada internationally. We've had the report of Amnesty International. We've had calls for this whole thing to be inquired into to determine what the truth is and what led to the killing, for the first time in the history of Canada, or at least in the last century, of a member of a first nation over a land claim dispute, and that happened here in Ontario. It really says something about our reputation for human rights and for dealing with the rights of indigenous peoples, and it says something that I don't want to have said internationally.

The faith community, representing B'nai Brith, the Anglican Church, the Mennonites, the Christian Reformed churches, the Roman Catholic Church, the Lutherans, the United Church of Canada, the Quakers, the Unitarian Church, together all called for an inquiry yesterday. These are responsible leaders in our community who are

disturbed by the events at Ipperwash, who believe that the truth has not come out and must come out. I just remind the members of some of the things that the leaders of those faith groups said yesterday.

"It appears that the actions and reactions of the Ontario Provincial Police on that night were not in keeping with established government policy for negotiating a peaceful resolution to disputes involving first nations peoples' assertion of aboriginal and treaty rights. There is also evidence of a specific plan of operations for the OPP in this situation, calling for negotiation, that was then ignored or changed on short notice."

Further, they say: "The Ontario Provincial Police at the scene also potentially engaged in the criminal beating of another unarmed civilian. No charges have been laid and the investigation of these circumstances has been stymied by a lack of cooperation from officers on the scene and their superiors."

I think the most important point the leaders of the faith communities make in their release from yesterday is: "The important underlying issues of negotiating a just resolution of outstanding land and treaty rights in this area will remain clouded in suspicion and fear until the clear light of an inquiry can be shone on the circumstances of this death."

The leaders of the faith community are issuing a challenge, a challenge to this government, a challenge to the people of Ontario, to find the truth, to shine the light of truth on the situation that led to the death of Dudley George at Ipperwash. The government of Ontario must meet that challenge if we are to be able to look our partners internationally in the eye and say that we, as people in a democracy, recognize the rights of indigenous peoples to assert their land rights and to make claims for restitution and compensation for wrongs in the past.

1020

I believe we need an inquiry to shine the light of truth on this situation so we can look ourselves in the eye; so we can look in the mirror and say that we do not act towards indigenous peoples the way so many regimes around the world do; that we stand for the right of aboriginal people, of first nations people in this country to be able to assure themselves that their rights are protected and the wrongs of the past are corrected.

I believe that the death of Dudley George is a tragedy that did not have to happen, that would not have happened if other approaches had been taken. It is certainly a blemish on the reputation of this province and of this country, and that must be excised.

As the member for Scarborough-Agincourt said, the statements made by this government, by the Attorney General, by the Premier, ever since that fateful night on September 5, 1995, have been shown to be wrong, repeatedly. The Attorney General has said there's no claim, that there's no evidence of a claim. How can he say that when we have evidence from 1937, when the park was being established, and it's clear that the leaders of the first nations at that time contacted the federal Department of Indian Affairs and said: "Look, there's a sacred burial

ground there. We want it protected. We want it properly fenced."

What is most disturbing about this situation is the change in approach apparently taken by the government in 1995 after the provincial election in June and another apparent change of approach by the police. In the past, when there have been land disputes involving first nations that led to confrontation, the approach taken by the government was that the government would not negotiate the substance of the claim as long as there was a blockade or an occupation; but the government would negotiate the peaceful end of the confrontation, leading to discussions and negotiations of the substantive questions subsequently. The Attorney General has said that this government's actions were consistent with that, yet we have seen that they were anything but consistent with that approach.

The police approach, because of the government's previous approach, has always been to cool things out, to avoid confrontation that might lead to injuries, or worse, either for the police or the first nations peoples. That has been the government's approach and the police approach. Essentially the police took the position that if there were a blockade or an occupation by first nations peoples, they would just keep everybody away, cool it down and hopefully, from the police position, have the first nations peoples tire of the situation and just stop the occupation or the blockade. That was the approach.

As we all know, an emergency committee was always convened in these situations that involved the police liaison person, members of the various ministries — it was usually bureaucrats, not MPPs. In our experience as a government there were never MPPs involved. It was always bureaucrats from the various ministries and they would sit and determine: "What are issues? How do we deal with this? How do we approach things?" The police would describe the situation. The bureaucrats didn't give direction to the police in terms of tactics. The police determined how to do that, but the police listened to the issues so that the liaison officer could report to the police on the scene about the issues involved so they would understand the situation.

That committee was convened because of the occupation of Ipperwash Provincial Park, keeping in mind that the Ministry of Natural Resources people had shown the occupiers how to operate the water system and had given them the keys, which again was consistent with the previous approach of governments in the past. As the faith communities indicated in their release, the police liaison officer made it clear to the committee that the police were just going to cool things out, keep everybody quiet and try to ensure there were no serious confrontations.

But after that meeting everything changed. Suddenly there were 250 officers on the scene. Suddenly the OPP was in contact with the Canadian Armed Forces and there was a liaison officer from the Canadian Armed Forces assigned to the Ipperwash situation. Suddenly the OPP was applying to the Canadian Armed Forces for armed personnel carriers. There were 250 officers on the scene to deal with at most 35 men, women and children in the

aboriginal community and no evidence that they were armed, none whatever, which has been confirmed in court since.

What happened to lead to this change in approach? We now know from the minutes we've received that at that meeting it was made clear that the government's approach was simply to get the Indians out of the park as soon as possible, nothing else. That was the approach. We have the quote from Ms Hutton that the Premier's comments were: "Indians out of the park — nothing else."

I haven't had a great deal of experience in these areas, I've had some, but it seems to me that if a police officer hears that kind of direction from the Premier's office, that must have been what changed the approach of the OPP so that they would indeed take a hard line. We must find out if that's the case.

What led to the OPP, with such a massive force, to decide to enter the park at 11 o'clock, under the cover of darkness, when it was not going to be easy to see what was going on? What led the aboriginal people in the park to drive the bus through the gate towards the OPP? There have been allegations that there was a beating taking place, a beating of a member of the first nations by the OPP. No charges have been laid in that area.

We need to know what happened. What were the events that led to the killing of Dudley George? But more important, what decisions were made, what directions were given by the government in this regard? We need to know the truth, as the faith communities have indicated.

We're not suggesting that the inquiry should be held right now. We're just suggesting the government should make a commitment that there will be an inquiry when all legal impediments are out of the way. In my view, an inquiry must be held as soon as possible. We must shine the light of truth on the events at Ipperwash that led to the death of Dudley George, or, as the faith communities have said, the negotiations of just outstanding land and treaty rights will remain clouded in suspicion and fear. We must shine a clear light of an inquiry on the circumstances that led to the death of Dudley George if we are to excise this blemish from the reputation of Ontario and Canada in the international community.

1030

Mr John L. Parker (York East): I rise this morning on behalf of the Attorney General and minister responsible for native affairs to address the motion before us. Let me begin by repeating what the minister has said previously in this House on this matter. "The incident that occurred in Ipperwash Provincial Park in September 1995 was a tragedy."

As members of this House know, a number of criminal charges were laid in connection with the event that occurred at Ipperwash at that time. Some of these criminal charges are still before the courts. There are also two appeals pending in regard to the Ontario Provincial Police officer convicted of criminal negligence causing death in the shooting incident. Furthermore, there are three ongoing civil actions arising from these events.

Under standing order 23(g), a member is cautioned against speaking in the Legislature about the substance of

a matter that is before the courts. Because these matters are before the courts, extreme care must be taken in making any comment that might prejudice the trials that are ongoing or might prejudice the rights of the accused involved in these matters.

Mr Wildman: It would have been nicer if the Attorney General remembered that when —

The Acting Speaker: Order. The member for Algoma, you had your turn, please.

Mr Parker: Our government's position on the matter of a public inquiry has been clear and it has been consistent. It is and it has always been based on respect for due process of the law. We have repeatedly stated that the government will only consider other options after matters currently before the courts have been completed. As such, this is not the appropriate time to be debating this question. It would be premature to make a decision or to comment further while these matters remain before the courts.

What should be the focus of our discussions, however, is Ontario's efforts to improve living conditions and build stronger economies for aboriginal people and to provide for a future that holds greater promise for the aboriginal people of this province. I'd like to take this opportunity to highlight the significant achievements in aboriginal affairs which our government has made during the past two years.

In March 1996, our government set out its approach to aboriginal affairs in the aboriginal policy framework. The goal of the framework is a future where aboriginal communities have stronger economies and a greater capacity to become more independent and self-reliant and to exercise greater responsibility for their own wellbeing.

Guided by the framework, our government is taking practical steps to encourage aboriginal self-sufficiency through economic and community development and to build stable, balanced relations between aboriginal people and their neighbours. This approach will enable us to address aboriginal issues in a consistent and effective manner that delivers real, tangible results, promotes economic growth and improves the quality of life in aboriginal communities.

Based on the goal and principles of the aboriginal policy framework, our government is working together with the aboriginal people on a provincial strategy to promote aboriginal economic and business development. Through the strategy, Ontario will encourage job creation, investment and economic growth as a key to building aboriginal self-reliance. It will also promote partnerships with the corporate sector that will benefit aboriginal people, businesses and communities.

We've already done considerable policy work on this strategy. We have spoken to more than 150 people from aboriginal communities, municipalities, businesses and financial institutions, to get their views on aboriginal economic development issues. Last November, the Ontario Native Affairs Secretariat and a private sector partner, the Council for the Advancement of Native Development Officers, co-hosted a forum on aboriginal business partnerships. More than 85 people attended from

the aboriginal business community. Government and the private sector representatives were there as well. They provided advice on business partnership development, relations between the corporate sector and aboriginal communities and the province's role in promoting aboriginal economic development.

In developing the strategy, we have consulted with first nation leaders, with representatives of Metis and off-reserve aboriginal organizations, with aboriginal business leaders and economic development groups and with the corporate sector. We hope to have one last round of consultations before the launching of the strategy in 1998.

Our government considers economic development to be the key to aboriginal self-reliance. The aboriginal economic development strategy will assist and encourage aboriginal economic development within the context of our government's overall commitment to restoring hope, jobs, growth and prosperity, and to improving the economic circumstances of all Ontarians.

An important tool for promoting aboriginal economic development is land claim settlements. Our government has signed agreements in principle on the Big Grassy, Sand Point and Assabaska land claims. Recently negotiators signed a draft agreement on the Whitefish River land claim. We are making significant progress on a number of other negotiations.

Settling land claims removes barriers between people, removes barriers to investment, and fosters a stable business climate and a stable community climate among local communities. This benefits aboriginal and non-aboriginal people alike.

Our government has taken steps to increase public involvement in land claim negotiations. On a number of claims we have added local citizens to our negotiating teams, as members or observers, and have established citizens advisory committees to ensure that the negotiations address the interests and concerns of everyone who lives and works in the claim area, so that when a resolution is found, it's a resolution that involves all the people who are affected.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): Why are you insulting these people?

The Acting Speaker: Member for Kingston and The Islands, please.

Mr Parker: We are also developing a policy statement on Ontario's approach to land claim negotiations. The policy statement will include input from aboriginal leaders, stakeholders and the general public.

Our government recognizes the need to hear the views of first nation leaders and be responsive to the concerns of aboriginal people in Ontario. On November 6, the Premier and the minister responsible for native affairs held a very positive and productive meeting with Ontario Regional Chief Tom Bressette and a delegation of grand chiefs and other first nation leaders.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Algoma, the member for Kingston and The Islands, please.

Mr Parker: The purpose of the meeting was to assist the Premier in preparing for the November 18 meeting of premiers, territorial leaders and national aboriginal leaders in Winnipeg. In Winnipeg, Ontario supported a recommendation that federal, provincial and territorial ministers responsible for aboriginal affairs and the national aboriginal leaders should —

Mr Wayne Lessard (Windsor-Riverside): On a point of order, Speaker: I want to bring to your attention standing rule 23(b) with respect to the comments that are being made by the member, and that is that they should be directed towards the question we're debating this morning. This isn't directed —

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. That's not a point of order, I think the member will realize, and I hope you will come back to the issue. You've been preambing a bit too long, in my opinion, and I will pay close attention to what you say.

Mr Parker: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I would suggest that to understand the events at Ipperwash it's important to understand the context in which the incident there arose and to understand the steps this government is taking to address that context and to ensure that problems such as the problem that occurred at Ipperwash do not occur again.

In Winnipeg, Ontario supported a recommendation that federal, provincial and territorial ministers responsible for aboriginal affairs and the national aboriginal leaders should meet as soon as possible to address social issues related to aboriginal people, the needs of aboriginal youth and other issues.

The Acting Speaker: Order. You have to come back to the topic, please. Come back to the topic.

Mr Parker: Mr Speaker, my remarks are related directly to the circumstances that give rise to concerns among our native community, and to the steps that are the positive steps that are being taken to address those concerns and to ensure that when concerns arise and need to be addressed, they are addressed in a positive, constructive manner, and to ensure there will be a future in which the kind of concerns and the kind of unrest which has so tragically marked some of the relationships between our native community and their surrounding communities do not arise.

1040

Our government is working with native leaders and with national leaders across the country to address those concerns underlying these difficulties. In that respect, Mr Speaker, I would suggest that my remarks this morning are directly —

The Acting Speaker: I am telling you again that if you err and go away from the topic, I will stand up again and remind you that you should not discuss any topic other than the topic on the issue of the moment, which is the incident at Ipperwash. Please just follow that issue and I will listen to you attentively.

Mr Parker: Mr Speaker, the resolution this morning calls upon the government to consider a broad context of matters. There are a number of recitals in the resolution

and I'm addressing the subject matter of those recitals. I would suggest that my remarks this morning are directly in line with the subject matter that has been brought before the House this morning. I will continue.

Another example of our approach to fostering stable relations is our process for bringing together ministers and chiefs to discuss issues of concern. Meetings were held in October 1996 and June 1997. We have agreed to meet again early next year. These meetings demonstrate our government's commitment to resolving issues of common concern to first nations and Ontario and to enhancing our relationship through discussion and dialogue and to ensure that episodes and confrontation are not the way of choice in matters of difficulty.

As part of our approach to fostering stable relations, in contrast to the experience that has marked so many of the difficulties in the past, the province signed the Grand River notification agreement in October 1996. This is the first agreement of its kind in Canada. Many have praised it as a model for establishing relationships based on goodwill and cooperation. Other jurisdictions across the country would do very well to follow this example.

Our policies are making a difference in the everyday lives of Ontario's aboriginal peoples. Last year we extended the Canada-Ontario retrofit agreement with the federal government. This agreement will bring indoor plumbing, sewage and electrification services to a total of 35 remote northern first nation communities in Ontario by the year 2001. If we are looking for the root cause of concern and difficulty in many of our native communities, we can look directly to the living conditions they have experienced to date and the need to address those living conditions so that we do not have the kind of frictions, the kind of frustrations, the kind of irritations and the kind of outrage that led to episodes such as at the episode at Ipperwash in September 1995. Running water, sewers and electricity are the basics for building self-reliance in any community, and over the life of the agreement about 3,100 jobs will be created, most of them in first nations communities, another crying need in our native communities.

Those are some of the practical steps that our government has taken in aboriginal affairs during our mandate, and our approach will continue to focus on practical steps to improve living conditions, strengthen economic opportunities and build self-reliance in aboriginal communities and to bridge the gulf that has so tragically characterized many of the relationships that have existed in the past and has led to many of the episodes that have occurred in the past, some, as in the case of Ipperwash, with terribly, terribly tragic results.

Mr Ramsay: I congratulate the member for Scarborough-Agincourt for bringing this resolution before the House. I have to say, Mr Speaker, that I certainly support you in your interventions during the previous speech, when the member for York East really gave a very weak polemic on the state of first nations policy, if there is any with the Harris government, instead of dealing with the issue. The issue is plain and simple: An innocent citizen of this province was shot dead in cold blood by our police

force. That's what this is about and that is what we should be addressing.

I want to address that because something very wrong happened on that evening in Ipperwash park, something very different from and that goes contrary to the history of how the OPP handles incidents such as this. The OPP is probably one of the most highly trained, highly disciplined, best-equipped police forces in the world. It is an extremely great police force and we should be proud of them, but occasionally, human failure being what it is, incidents happen.

I remember back in the late 1980s when there was an incident with the tactical squad in southwestern Ontario and a very tragic accident happened. The government of the day, the Liberal government, decided to do a review on the tactical units in Ontario, of which there are about three copies in the legislative library, and I would encourage people to get a copy of that. What came out of that is very interesting. What came out of it sets the policy that this government today should have followed, and it's very different from what happened on that night in Ipperwash park.

The review says in a sort of summary:

"We preface our support for the continuing use of police tactical units with that caveat. We believe that these units are necessary, but they must be unquestionably the best trained and most capable, and it must be clear what they are being used for: the non-violent resolution of high-risk incidents to safeguard human lives. The techniques of containment and de-escalation of the crisis are vital to the peaceful resolution of most dangerous incidents involving an armed person."

I believe that all evidence, being in, shows that in this case we weren't even dealing with armed persons.

The report continues: "It is our view that containment and de-escalation must be the priority in the training of all tactical officers in Ontario.

"Police tactical units must also have the confidence of the public and fellow police officers." In order to do that, the community has to be confident that the teams they are sending out are "rigorously trained not only in the use of special weapons, but also in the practice of patience and restraint under high-stress, life-threatening conditions...."

Something very different happened that night, because what we had here was not a hostage-taking. We just had people who came into the park to occupy some space because it was their very strong belief, which backed up by evidence this government has in its possession, that there is a burial ground in that area and that both the federal and provincial governments have not dealt with this issue for the better part of this century. That's what this was about.

We know that the tactical unit of the OPP has been trained to wait these situations out, to negotiate. There were no lives being threatened here on either side but something happened that night. That is the key question of why we want this public inquiry. Why did the police act in a manner contrary to their training and their techniques and their tactical strategies?

Something happened here and we suspect, from the evidence gathered through freedom of information, that my colleague from Scarborough-Agincourt has been able to secure that this government directed the OPP to clear that park and to use whatever force was necessary. That is wrong. It is wrong and in this case we can see that it led to a tragic incident that cost the life of an innocent Ontario citizen. That's why we need this inquiry, and I'm here today to support my colleague in the request for that inquiry.

1050

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-Walkerville): I too want to congratulate my colleague from Scarborough-Agincourt on keeping this issue in front of both the Legislature and the public of Ontario. It is a tremendous tragedy that we have to have this discussion in the first instance.

A public inquiry is not only merited, it's demanded. Despite the patronizing polemic we heard from the government side around this issue, there are five compelling reasons why a public inquiry ought to be held.

First, the government of this province had evidence at the time the OPP got involved that the occupied land did have a first nation burial ground. The evidence dated back to 1937 and it said, "...the old Indian cemetery which is located within the territory now being developed as a park."

The second piece of troubling information that we are all aware of is that the first nation was unarmed. The occupiers did not bear arms. They did not bear a threat to the public nor to the police. These facts were borne out in trial. The judge at the trial said, "I find the accused knew that Dudley George did not have any firearms on his person when he shot him," that the story of the muzzle flash "was concocted ex post facto in an ill-fated attempt to disguise the fact that an unarmed man had been shot." An unarmed man had been shot, a man who could not defend himself, a man who took a stand and was part of a situation that quickly turned tragic.

We have heard time and again in this chamber from the Premier of this province that his government had no involvement. Yet subsequent investigation by various individuals, including my colleague from Scarborough, showed just the opposite. Notes from meetings quoting the Premier's executive assistant showed quite conclusively that in fact there was government involvement.

In this province, historically the OPP have had a policy of negotiation, not confrontation, with our first nations, recognizing the special sensitivities around those issues. Government after government pursued this type of policy. Yet, when this government took office, there was a dramatic shift.

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke-Rexdale): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I've counted the numbers in here and I don't think we've got a quorum.

The Acting Speaker: Would you please check if we have a quorum.

Clerk at the Table (Ms Lisa Freedman): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk at the Table: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Windsor-Walkerville.

Mr Duncan: The fourth point I was dealing with was the abandonment of this long-standing policy. We ought not to be surprised, because this is a government that has long shown intolerance to issues of this nature.

Finally, the government has indicated on a number of occasions that while there were 52 charges laid against first nations, all but two were dropped or found not guilty. Of the charges the crown dropped — 43 of them — seven of those charged have been found innocent, with two still in the trial process. The only conviction arising from the incident was an OPP officer found guilty of criminal negligence causing the death of Dudley George.

There is no compelling reason why the government cannot and should not call a public inquiry. This is a tragedy, in my view, of unparalleled proportion in the province of Ontario. A first nation citizen, unarmed, was gunned down. There is evidence that the government directed these operations in a general sense. Our religious community in this country, civil rights communities in this country, first nations communities here in this province and country and indeed the international community call on us, compel us as a Legislature to call a public inquiry so the truth can be brought to bear on this situation and to prevent any type of tragedy of this nature occurring ever again.

Ms Annamarie Castrilli (Downsview): I want to thank the member for Scarborough-Agincourt for bringing forward this issue of fundamental justice and fairness. This is a story of heavy-handedness and bullying and hiding the truth and fabricating more of it, and in the end a story of an innocent man shot dead. The facts have been recited here this morning. Dudley George was killed on September 6, 1995. The judge in the first instance found that he was unarmed. Since then all the charges that have been laid by the crown have either been dropped or dismissed by the courts, with two civil suits pending.

The latest criminal charge that was dropped was September 29, 1997. There has been outrage not only in the native community but in the broader sector. Ontarians have been shocked to hear that in this province we would behave in this fashion.

I'd like to ask three questions. One is, can an inquiry be called? It's pretty clear that it can. The Supreme Court of Canada, in the Westray mining disaster, indicated the circumstances under which a public inquiry may be called. Time doesn't permit me to go into all the details, but I would suggest the Attorney General look into that.

Second, in the Krever blood inquiry clear guidelines were again set by the Supreme Court of Canada, where there are civil and/or criminal investigations. The ruling on Krever again could not be clearer and the Attorney General should have a look at that.

Third, I would say to the Attorney General that he himself has called for inquiries where there were civil

cases pending. I would remind him that in the Bernardo case he ordered an inquiry and the cases coming out of the Bernardo case are still before the courts.

Why an inquiry? I think the answers to that are fairly evident. There is contradictory evidence before the public of Ontario, and justice demands a fair hearing. What would an inquiry be charged with doing? We need to know what directions were given to the OPP. Why did the OPP abandon its long-standing policy of negotiation and instead engage in confrontation? Why did the government seek an ex parte injunction? Why were the aboriginal people's claim of a burial ground ignored? Who authorized the OPP buildup at Ipperwash? Why was Dudley George characterized as armed when in fact he was not?

1100

What was the role of the government in all this? That is the most troubling question of all. We have heard from Ontarians everywhere on this issue. The B'nai Brith, the United Church of Canada, the Anglican Church of Canada, the Mennonite community, the Lutheran church, many editorial boards across this province, individual citizens, and the aboriginal people themselves have decried the lack of action of this government in a situation which is critical, which is important.

The mark of a society is not how it treats its strongest and its best, but how it deals with its weakest and how it deals with its minorities. The aboriginal people have been dealt a heavy blow at Ipperwash. Their rights have been ignored. Dudley George's right to a fair hearing of his case has been ignored. It is appropriate in the circumstances for the Attorney General to call an inquiry. There is no legal impediment for him to do so. There is no moral reason why he should not do so. There is no public policy reason that could possibly justify not calling a public inquiry on this, the most important of issues, the rights of individuals vis-à-vis the state.

I want to congratulate the member for Scarborough-Agincourt. I would remind the House that yesterday we celebrated the 49th anniversary of the declaration of human rights. This government made pretty speeches about how important human rights are to a democratic society. Today we ask them to put their money where their mouth is. We ask them to remember that human rights means respecting the rights of individuals. Dudley George was an individual. The people who were involved at Ipperwash are very real and their rights are being trampled on. Again, I congratulate the member for Scarborough-Agincourt and I call upon the government to take action, to take responsibility and to call for a public inquiry.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Scarborough-Agincourt, you have two minutes.

Mr Phillips: To me what happened is quite clear. The government had been elected for two months. They were going to deal with these things in a different way. It tragically blew up in their faces. The last thing Mike Harris wants is for a public inquiry on this. The reason is,

in my opinion, that he will be deeply implicated in it and deeply damaged by it.

Surely we owe it to our first nations to commit to a public inquiry. If it was any other group anywhere else in the province, there would be no hesitation about it.

We were told there was no burial ground there; there was a burial ground. We were told they were armed and opened fire; court trials proved they weren't. We were told that they were there illegally and had to be charged; then the crown essentially dropped all the charges when they found that they were there legitimately because they had the belief and the understanding and the evidence of a burial ground. We were told that the government had no interference in it; then we find minutes of meetings showing that the government instructed the police to remove the occupiers from the park.

Believe me: This will not go away. This will continue to dog Mike Harris. I promise you that ultimately the truth will come out. I promise you that. I promise you that when the truth comes out, the truth about Mike Harris's role will become evident. I also promise that those of you who support the hiding of the truth, the stonewalling of this, will be held accountable. Those of you who support Mike Harris in trying to block the truth from coming out will be held accountable. This is a most serious matter for the province of Ontario, and I hope the resolution today passes.

BILL 160 REPEAL ACT, 1997

LOI DE 1997 ABROGEANT

LE PROJET DE LOI 160

Mr Hampton moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 168, An Act to Protect our Children's Education and Defend Local Democracy / Projet de loi 168, Loi visant à protéger l'éducation de nos enfants et à défendre la démocratie locale.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Pursuant to standing order 95(c)(i), the member has 10 minutes for his presentation.

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): First of all, I want to begin my remarks by pointing out that what Bill 168 is about is continuing the discussion about education in this province. It's about continuing the discussion about what direction ought to be taken in this province with respect to our children's schools and education in general at the elementary and secondary level.

You could call Bill 168 An Act to repeal Bill 160, because that is what is implicit in this private member's bill. It seeks to repeal Bill 160 because fundamentally I believe and members of the New Democratic Party caucus believe that Bill 160 goes in entirely the wrong direction with respect to education.

Let me frame the issues this way and let me put it to parents across this province: Do parents believe that by taking \$1.5 billion out of elementary and secondary education that our children's education will be improved?

The Conservative government has already taken \$800 million out of elementary and secondary education. It was disclosed in the performance contract of the deputy minister, which I was happy to show to the media about six weeks ago, that the government plans to take close to a further \$700 million out of elementary and secondary classrooms over the next year. Added together, it's a cut of \$1.5 billion from elementary and secondary classrooms across this province. Parents need to ask themselves the question: Does anyone believe that our children's education can be improved by taking a further \$1.5 billion out of our children's schools?

The second question that is implicit here is this: Do people believe that our children's education can be improved by establishing a centralized, top-down, command-style bureaucracy over education and schools in this province? Learning is a very dynamic and spontaneous activity. Learning must happen in specific classrooms and in specific environments across this province. To attempt to establish a top-down, command-style bureaucracy over such a spontaneous and dynamic activity in my view flies in the face of reason. But that is essentially what this government is trying to do. I put to parents across this province that a top-down, centralized, command-style bureaucracy — in other words, trying to run the schools of this province from an office tower in downtown Toronto — cannot succeed.

Finally, do people believe that by laying off another 5,000 teachers, likely as many as 10,000 teachers, our schools can be improved, our classrooms can be improved? I hardly think so, but that is also implicit in what has been set out.

As I said just a few minutes ago, I want to put very clearly on the record that it is my firm belief and the firm belief of New Democrats across this province that this government's direction in terms of education, as expressed in Bill 160, is moving in fundamentally the wrong direction and cannot and will not improve education across this province. The three central tenets — (1) that you can improve education by laying off teachers, (2) that you can improve education by taking \$1.5 billion out of the system, and (3) that you can improve education by establishing a centralized, top-down bureaucracy — also move in entirely the wrong direction.

We need to continue to have this debate about education in this province. We need to continue to have this debate about this government's direction on education in this province.

1110

I am under no illusions. This government, the members of the government, the MPPs from the government side, will vote against this private member's bill. They will vote against Bill 168. However they may vote against it, that will not shut down the debate, and I want to outline at least six ways in which people across this province can continue to engage in this debate and can continue to hold the government's policy on education accountable.

The first flashpoint will occur very soon when the government is forced to announce funding for schools for

the stub year. This announcement was supposed to have been made back in October. We are now into the middle of December and there is still no announcement about stub-year funding for schools for what is left of the school year, from January to June. This is incredible. We are now down to the point where these schools in two weeks have to operate with this budget, and they still don't know what the budget is. What an incredible way to run our school system: to keep everyone in the dark as to what their funding formula is and how much they can apportion to teaching, how much they can apportion to school supplies, how much they can apportion to heating the schools, lighting the schools, transportation — to keep all of that under cover and keep it in the dark until the point where we are now two weeks away.

I suggest that the reason the government doesn't want to put that information out there is because it will involve a very substantial cut to classrooms, so the government wants to keep that information under wraps as long as possible. The people across this province should know that the issue of stub-year funding is going to be out there very soon, and people can use it as a test. People can use it as a test as to what the real direction of the government is. I submit that the education finance officials who have been writing to the Minister of Education are correct that it's a substantial cut, a cut of about \$220 million a year.

The second part of this is that under the government's educational direction, the new boards of education are supposed to be up and running in January. How can they be up and running? They don't know their budgets yet. Many of them have not had a formal meeting yet. Speaker, I would suggest to you that people need to watch this ill-called setup of the new boards, because it is very likely to be a disaster. It will be chaotic, and that, I think, will also be a good indication of this government's true direction with respect to education.

The third part will occur some time towards the end of January, early February, when the Minister of Finance, behind closed doors, with no public debate, no public discussion, no opportunity for public accountability, will set the property tax rates with respect to education financing. Six billion dollars in taxation will be set behind closed doors, with no opportunity for public scrutiny or public input. I would suggest to you that people should be concerned about the adequacy of this formula, the democracy of this formula and, most of all perhaps, the fairness of this formula as to how it sets those property tax rates, who wins, who loses and, most of all, how adequate it is for our students and our schools.

The fourth flashpoint which will occur will be some time in March, when the new boards of education will have to send out preliminary notice of layoff to teachers. It will have to happen that soon because the boards do not want to be caught in a situation where later on in the year they are laying off teachers and haven't given them some notice. So we'll get an indication right away, within the next four months, of how many teachers in this province are going to be laid off, and that will come in the

preliminary notice of layoffs which will happen in about March.

Then in April the government will have to provide to the new boards of education some indication of what the overall funding formula will be for the school year which will begin in September 1998, and people will be able to see just how substantial the cuts are to elementary and secondary education.

Finally, in early May, the new boards will have to give teachers not a preliminary notice of layoff, but a real notice of layoff. That is when we will start to get a very clear picture of how many teachers are going to lose their jobs under Bill 160 and under this government's educational direction.

I invite people to continue in this debate.

Mr Bruce Smith (Middlesex): It's certainly a pleasure to have the opportunity to participate in this morning's debate, and in particular to speak in opposition to Bill 168. To vote for this bill, in my opinion, would be an indication of support, and that's not nearly enough in terms of the changes that need to be made with respect to education in this province.

I'm quite surprised that the third party, the NDP, would advance this particular bill, because the essence of it is to repeal Bill 160. That fit would be more comfortable, from my perspective, with the Liberal Party in this province, because very clearly over the past month the Liberal Party has articulated and publicly acknowledged that it has no education policy for this province. They've very clearly indicated strong support for the status quo and a comfort level of keeping things the way they are today in education in this province. I would suggest that's neither appropriate nor acceptable to the people of Ontario.

I must reflect upon the dialogue that took place between the now member for Dovercourt, Mr Silipo, and Mr Cooke during the government agencies debate at the time that Mr Cooke was being appointed as co-chair of the Education Improvement Commission. I think it was an important dialogue. Here we have two former ministers of education of this province in dialogue, exchanging views. To hold the portfolio of Minister of Education and Training in this province is a duty that requires a great deal of skill and ability. Both of those gentlemen brought that to their portfolios.

The dialogue was important, because in asking the question, Mr Silipo received the response from Mr Cooke as follows:

"Some things that are being done here are close to what we were going to do. Even some of the decisions that the government has had to make, that it will be making, in terms of the new financing of school boards and how the dollars will be distributed, those are things that no matter who would have been elected, there would have had to be some decisions on."

Very clearly there was an understanding of Mr Cooke that changes had to occur within the education system. Mr Silipo I believe understood the same. In 1992, while Minister of Education, he indicated, "Education reform means significant improvements in what we teach and how

we teach." I agree. That's why this government has moved to bring a new curriculum base, one that is based on student outcome, that has clear and defined expectations and rigour, to this province.

"It means reshaping our education system so we can meet the needs of all our young people and prepare them to meet the challenges of a diverse society...." Again I find myself in agreement with Mr Silipo. That is why this government, through Bill 160, has established the framework to introduce a new funding model for all students in this province.

"It means moving towards more cooperative and cost-effective approaches to the delivery of education programs and services." Once again I agree. This government has moved, through Bill 104 and Bill 160, to establish a streamlined, more accountable school board and administration system in this province.

Very clearly my surprise with the third party is, as I've said before, one of some shock because I thought they understood the need for change.

I heard the member for Rainy River, the leader of the third party, say that it's about continuing dialogue. I would suggest there has been substantial dialogue, not only through this process but through numerous reports and reviews that have been conducted since 1950 on the issue of education in this province. In fact, former ministers of the crown within his own caucus realized the need for education reform and were debating that issue in 1992.

To support Bill 168 this morning would simply be an indication of support for the status quo. Simply put, that is not acceptable. This government has clearly indicated its focus and desire to bring in a streamlined system that is clearly centred on student performance and kids in the classroom.

Some ask what our vision is for education in this province. I think that has been very clearly articulated since June 1995. It's a system that puts students first and student achievement first as well. It's a system that will redefine and renew the role of trustees in this province. It's a system that will realize a streamlined and more accountable school board system; a system that treats all students fairly through its focus on students themselves and the resources that teachers need in the classroom. It's a system that brings about a renewed curriculum, as I indicated, one that redefines rigour and student expectation and outcome. It's a system that respects and encourages parental involvement in education in this province. It's a comprehensive package which will take the education system into the future in a constructive and well-managed fashion.

Bill 168 fails to provide that vision, fails to act on the numerous background studies and reviews that have been conducted, and is a bill that fails to realize the necessary changes that have to be made to the education system in this province.

1120

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): I'm happy to be able to share a few moments of our time talking about Bill 168.

I stand in support of Bill 168 because it continues the dialogue with the people of Ontario with regard to quality public education.

The member for Middlesex, the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education, says he's proud about the curriculum advances, the standardized report cards and the testing advances that Bill 160 puts in place. He should know quite clearly that 160 has nothing to do with curriculum, has nothing to do with standardized reporting to parents and has nothing to do with testing. I am very concerned when the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education doesn't know what the goals of 160 are, and that's why it is very important that the dialogue be continued.

Bill 160 allows the government to set class size averages. It does nothing to control or protect class sizes. I've said that on repeated occasions and that's why support for this bill is necessary. What the people of Ontario are going to see in the future if Bill 160 isn't changed by this government or the next, Liberal, government is that class sizes are going to continue to grow in Ontario. As a former teacher, I'm very concerned about what I see happening in the classrooms all over Ontario: classes of 32, 34, 36, 40, 41. That is unacceptable and that is the legacy of the Conservative vision of education.

Setting an average class size while reducing the amount of money in operating grants is only going to lead to fewer classes. Since the student population of Ontario is growing, if there are going to be fewer resources, if there are going to be fewer teachers, if there are going to be more students, that can only translate into larger class sizes, class sizes which will impede students' ability to learn in a properly funded public education system. That's what the Liberals are concerned about. We're concerned that Bill 160 does not enshrine a properly funded public education system; in fact, it destroys it.

That's why students, parents, teachers, every partner in education has told you that Bill 160 is wrong. I support Bill 168 because it brings to the forefront the importance of ensuring that the dialogue and the debate over 160 doesn't quit, isn't diminished and will constantly be put on the front burner as opposed to the back burner.

This government will try over the course of the next three months, with smoke and mirrors, to disguise what's really happening to public education. It's clear: Public education is being destroyed because of Bill 160. That has been proven. Every presenter has told you that public education will not be enhanced because of Bill 160. That's why we must continue the dialogue.

Bill 160 clearly puts our educational leaders in limbo. The amendment, based on a vindictive, punitive measure only, not based on any sound educational philosophy, to remove principals and vice-principals from their federations is putting your educational leaders in limbo. It's wrong. It's wrong for principals and vice-principals, but more important, it's wrong for the students in our educational system.

Come January 1, there will be chaos with some of the newly appointed principals and vice-principals; come

April 1, there is going to be chaos with those already in leadership roles; and come September 1, we will have a system of education in place which is inferior to the one we had one year ago, five years ago, 10 years ago.

Because education is always, and must always, be focused on change, we have to ensure that change is productive and positive. Bill 160 is a negative change for education, cannot be supported, and we must support initiatives such as Bill 168.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): I stand with pride to support Bill 168, presented by our leader of the New Democratic Party, and say immediately that what we're doing through this bill is to praise the teachers who stood up to defend themselves as teachers and stood up to defend classroom education. That is what Bill 168 stands for. It stands for a defence of teachers and teaching and it stands for a defence of parents, mostly women, I would add — at least at the meetings I go to most of the people who come are women — to defend what they see as an erosion of our public school system. That's what this bill does.

To listen to the member for Middlesex, who is still around here — look at the language and you will see what this fellow and this government are all about. These are the words they use: "status quo." He opposes these others as people who defend the status quo, making it appear as if what we've got isn't good, even though the Premier goes to Europe and says, "We've got the best education system in the world."

Interjection: That was there.

Mr Marchese: That was then; that was there. This is now, I guess.

The other language the member for Middlesex uses: "reshaping to meet the needs of our society; more cost-effective," says he from Middlesex; "streamlined" is the word; "centred on kids' education"; "redefine the role of trustees"; "a system that treats all kids fairly"; "a new curriculum"; "involves parents"; "changes need to be made."

Did you hear anything in there that had any substance, that speaks to what is going on in the classroom, with students, with parents, with principals? There is nothing of the sort. All we have is through the voice — la portavoce, the parliamentary assistant — of the Premier, M. Harris, and the Minister of Education and others engaged in a process of myth-making, a promotion of language that leads people to conclude they're doing something. But it's motionless motion. It's going nowhere. It is intended to deceive the public, to make them believe that something is happening in the educational system, but I argue that nothing is happening as a result of Bill 160.

Let me tell you quickly what Bill 160 is all about. They argue — our slick Minister of Education, David Johnson; he is slick; most of these folks are very slick in their presentation of the issues — there are three things in this bill that will improve education quality and he says it's going to make it more accountable. Do you know what it means when he says, "We're going to make it more accountable"? He's saying they're going to centralize

education financing. That is what it's all about: taking control of the finances; taking it away from the boards of education, those closest to the students, to the teachers and to the parents, taking that control away and bringing it to Queen's Park.

This is the same M. Harris who said — and there's a woman here with a sign. It's a quote from M. Harris saying, "I shudder to think what would happen to education if control fell into the hands of the government."

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): Who said that?

Mr Marchese: Mike Harris, the Premier. He used to have such views, but his views have changed now. Why have they changed? Because he says he wants to make the system more accountable. No. He wants to centralize education financing to reduce the level of finance that goes to the boards of education under the guise of making it fair to all. He doesn't say, "We're going to chop, we're going to whack the education system." He says, "We're going to make it fair to all."

1130

He's taking it over to cut the money. He's going to harmonize down. He's going to take \$500 million from the metropolitan system and shift it around, is what he says he wants to do. He's going to give educational grants that will be similar to every student in the province, which means some boards will come down from where they are. We're not bringing education financing up, we're bringing it down. He calls that fairness.

Mr Wayne Lessard (Windsor-Riverside): It's a race to the bottom.

Mr Marchese: A race to the bottom indeed. That's what this centralization is about all.

I tell you, he needs the money. Why? Because of his income tax cut; that's why he needs the money. He's got to bring his deficit numbers down, and to do so, he's got to go like a gunslinger against the boards of education and take money out, from teachers, from boards, to finance the tax cut that's going to go to the bankers, the developers, those who own big real estate, corporate élites who have the big bucks with the big pockets. They're saying to Mike Harris: "Bring the money over, Mike. We're still in a recession. We need your money because we want to build jobs." In the meantime, they're going into those deep blue pockets. That's where the money is going.

He says there are two other things in this bill, and he speaks about class size, giving the illusion that he's going to reduce the class size. Do you know what it takes to reduce the class size by one? Millions, if not billions, of dollars to reduce class size by one. This guy is taking money out, not putting money back in. How can he reduce class size? I tell you, he can't. He just can't do it. There's no money.

Mr Hampton: He won't.

Mr Marchese: Not that he won't, he can't. So it is wrong to suggest in the myth-making that class size is going to go down. The average class size is meaningless, but it's couched in language that makes it appear the class size is going to go down.

Those are two things this guy and the member for Middlesex are saying is going to bring about greater equality for our educational system, and he's shocked at this Bill 168. It comes as a great surprise to him that we would be opposed. He's shocked.

He's got one more thing, our slick Minister of Education, who says: "Preparation time is a big problem. We're going to cut it and that's going to create more contact time with students." But people have said to him: "If you reduce preparation time for teachers, taking time away that they use to help students on a number of curriculum issues — curriculum-related stuff, sports-related stuff that students want — if you reduce that time, please make sure that time that's taken away is put back into the system. Take it away from some, okay, but if you're going to do that, put it back." But he's not doing that. There's no claim from the minister or the Premier that he's going to do that, after repeated questions from our caucus.

What does it tell you? It tells you there is no more contact time. Time is taken away and teachers are gone. That's what that means. This is the slick Minister of Education and my good friend here from Middlesex, who says he's shocked at this bill that would attempt to repeal the devastation caused by this bill that does nothing for anyone except to take money away from us.

If you want to help the kids, make sure you put the principals back into the classroom. Principals are principal teachers; that's the genesis of the term. You can't take those people out of the classroom. They're not corporate élites, they're teachers, and they are there to assist the curriculum, to assist teachers in improving the quality of education. If you take them out, like these corporate Tories would want to do, you disconnect an essential unity that exists between teachers and principals. If you want to improve the educational system —

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Halton Centre.

Mr Marchese: There's more. These guys talk about parental involvement. We have already done that; previous governments have done that. There are parent councils in the school system.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Halton Centre, the member for Fort York has the floor.

Mr Marchese: He'll get his chance.

If you want to involve parents in a greater, more connected way, involve the 95% of the parents who are not involved in the education system. That's quality education. Find a way to involve that 95% of the parents who are not involved. There are reasons for that.

Bill 160 doesn't speak to that. There is nothing of the sort. It doesn't deal with curriculum leadership. That's what effective schools are all about; the research is clear on this. Research says that when principals are good curriculum leaders and work well with teachers, the educational system changes. There's nothing in there for this, except to take money out of the educational system. I worry, because two billion bucks come from funds raised by local boards and the province has no responsibility for

those two billion bucks' worth of programs. Programs will disappear and jobs will disappear as a result. I guarantee that.

That is why we support the repeal of that bill through Bill 168, and we urge people to join our petition-for-a-referendum campaign, to fight these Tories in a way that is sustained enough until they call that election, and sufficiently so to get these guys out.

Mr Tim Hudak (Niagara South): I'm pleased to rise in the debate on Bill 168 today. This is an interesting debate, and some interesting politics will occur in the chamber today, to see how the opposition parties will vote on the bill to repeal Bill 160, and I guess to go back to the old way of doing things in education.

I fully expect the NDP to vote as a team for this bill. It is their leader's bill, after all, I think a leader very well respected in his party; I don't sense the same dissent that I do in the other opposition party over the leadership of the party. They'll vote for this not only because they respect their leader, but also because they fully believe that the more influence and power unions have to set things like class sizes or to raise tax rates — I guess the NDP believes that the more powerful unions are and the more money that is brought into the system, the more money there is to spend, the higher taxes are, that's a good thing for Ontario. I strongly disagree with their philosophy, but at least I respect that their philosophy is consistent and they've been very clear about it. They have policies and have ideas. I don't agree with the ideas, necessarily, but at least they have ideas.

The Liberal Party, on the other hand, has said very clearly, and their leader in fact boasted on television, "We have no education policy," which is curious. I guess that's the old Liberal way of doing things: trying to be a blank slate and say, "Whatever you believe in, yes, that's what we believe in too," and they'll try to pull the wool over the eyes of Ontarians.

Interestingly, we're seeing something develop. Twice in the last couple of weeks they have come out with policy ideas. They voted last week against Bill 161, the bill to help parents pay for day care costs and such which were imposed upon them by the illegal teachers' strike. The Liberal Party voted against that idea — they didn't think the money should go to the parents — while the NDP abstained from that vote. It's curious that the Liberals were against helping out parents with their day care costs from the strike.

Second, the leader of the Liberal Party said that if he becomes Premier of Ontario, he will repeal Bill 160, which is very interesting. I think that might be more consistent with the NDP's philosophy. I'm not sure why the Liberals are being so strong in saying: "We want to go back to the old ways of doing things. We want to go back to where the unions had a much greater influence in setting tax rates." I'm not sure whether the Liberals are against all of the bill or parts of it. That's one thing they're still hiding, to an extent.

I'm just very curious about why the Liberal leader wants to go back to allowing the steep increase in property

tax rates that we've seen over the past 10 or 15 years from education property taxes. I would expect that the so-called business Liberals would like to see property taxes for education lowered, or frozen at least, but they are saying now that they in fact would like to see those raised. Maybe that's what the Liberal leader wants to do, to raise education property taxes. Maybe that's what he doesn't like about Bill 160.

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Maybe the Liberal leader, Mr McGuinty, wants unions to be able to choose to increase class sizes as they've done in the past, and certainly we oppose that. We think very, very strongly that they should be set in legislation so that they will not increase. However, the Liberals seem to want to go back to the old days and turn back the clock and to say, "If the union leaders think it's a good idea to increase class size, we're all for that."

Perhaps the Liberals want to put principals and vice-principals into the union. Maybe that's one of their ideas, and that will be a policy that they are coming forward with.

Finally, maybe they don't believe in making parent councils legislated or mandatory. I certainly believe that parent councils can play an important role in the education system to help develop policy and to help implement decisions in the system, but the Liberal Party perhaps will come out with a policy saying that they are not in favour of parent councils. Maybe that's what they don't like about Bill 160.

I'm interested to see if they will vote on this and how they'll vote because I think it will be a telling moment to determine whether the Liberal Party wants to proceed with education reform or if they want to go back to the bad old days of higher taxes and larger class sizes. We'll see which way they vote on this legislation, and I'll leave the rest of my time to the wisdom of my neighbour the member for Niagara Falls.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-Walkerville): The government's Bill 160 has absolutely nothing to do with better education. You are cutting teachers from our classrooms. You are cutting money from kids. You are raising property taxes. You are doing nothing to improve our standardized scores. You are undermining quality education in this province and are doing nothing at all to make our schools and our kids more competitive for the next century. So yes, we will support this bill and we will repeal Bill 160 when we form a government in a year and a half.

Your propaganda aside, you learned the hardest lesson of your political careers last month. The people of this province said to you unequivocally that education reform involves spending more in the classroom, not less —

Mr Terence H. Young (Halton Centre): Bring back the clock.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Halton Centre.

Mr Duncan: Education in this province ought to see more teachers in classrooms, not less. Principals and vice-principals are educators not administrators, and they ought to stay in that kind of capacity.

Don't tell us about lack of policy and lack of vision. Your party, your government broke every one of its commitments on education. You said you wouldn't cut from the classroom and then you defined "heat" outside of the class.

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): No, we didn't. We did not.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Peterborough.

Mr Duncan: You have centralized power. You have taken local decision making away and you've moved it to the Mowat Block. You've moved it to Toronto. So in Peterborough, your citizens won't have a say in education. They're going to have to answer to bureaucrats at Queen's Park —

Mr Stewart: They certainly will.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Peterborough.

Mr Duncan: You are interested in only taking money out of Halton region and putting it into Queen's Park. Your schools in Halton region threw the member off their property; and thank goodness. Thank goodness for that because they understood the false propaganda of this government around education.

If this government spent as much time declaring war on illiteracy as it does on declaring war on teachers and kids, this province would be a much better place to live in. It would be a province where our education system would in fact move forward and not backward. It would be a province where we could once again say that we're prepared to invest in our kids.

This government wants to cut money out of our classrooms to give a tax cut to their rich friends and then they are going to raise property taxes. They're going to raise property taxes in Halton region. They're going to raise property taxes right across the 905. They're going to raise property taxes in virtually every municipality in this province.

They started out in January with their megaweek announcements and every one of them has had to be amended, changed or simply removed. The final insult: We hear the members opposite talk about setting a common tax rate. What they forget to tell you, what they don't tell you in the propaganda pieces is that it's going to be done by regulation, that is, no votes, no accountability, no local input — regulation. The government has no vision on education, it has no policy. Its policy is to take money out of classrooms. Its policy is to lay off teachers. Its policy is to raise property taxes so that it can make ill-advised commitments that most people in this province saw through right from the very beginning.

I join my colleagues in voting for this bill, but I would be remiss if I didn't comment on some of the things that the co-chair of the Education Improvement Commission has said, both in this House —

Interjection: Who's that?

Mr Duncan: Dave Cooke, the former education minister.

Mr Cooke said: "Some things that are being done here are close to what we were going to do. Even some of the decisions that the government has had to make, that it will

be making, in terms of the new financing of school boards and how the dollars will be distributed...."

Then, on province-wide television, Mr Cooke said, "A lot of the reforms that we're working on, a reduction in the number of school boards, is something that we, the NDP, announced, that I, the Minister of Education, announced when we were in government.

Interjection: Dave Cooke?

Mr Duncan: Dave Cooke said that. Dave Cooke and Mike Harris working on education together.

What else did he say? Mr Marchese spoke of decentralization versus centralization. Here's what Dave Cooke had to say, "We have had in our province through the 1970s and 1980s the most decentralized education system probably in the western world, where nobody was responsible for anything, where we basically had 168 ministries of education."

I want to conclude with the last thing that Mr Cooke had to say to our teachers' federations, our partners in education:

"I think that they are, but I also think that the leadership of the teachers' federations have got to understand their part in the role is to provide leadership for change, and for the last 10 years they have virtually opposed every reform that's not selling with the public."

At least I'll say this for Mr Cooke: He has been consistent over the last five years, unlike his party, and don't think the people of this province will forget that.

Mr Lessard: I want to speak in support of Bill 168, a bill to repeal Bill 160, in support of our NDP leader, Howard Hampton. I think he reflects the views of hundreds of thousands of people in the province who recognize that Bill 160 is all about centralization of power. It's all about withdrawing hundreds of millions of dollars from our education system and has nothing to do with improving the quality of education in Ontario.

When the Premier spoke on third reading of Bill 160, he said that this was going to be an historic occasion in Ontario. One wonders, if it's so historic, why the NDP didn't even get a chance to participate in third reading debate. A mere two minutes, that's all that we were allowed to speak on it.

This is a government that has been acting in a dictatorial and undemocratic fashion for the past two years, and that's why members like myself and other members of the NDP didn't even get a chance to participate in debate on Bill 160, so I'm pleased to be able to finally have that opportunity today. But this demonstrates that this is a government that really isn't interested in listening.

Mike Harris wanted to pick a fight with teachers because he thought that was a fight that he was going to be able to win. He thought he was going to be able to get the support of parents who were going to be upset during a teachers' political protest in having to make alternative child care arrangements. That's why he introduced Bill 161, as a bribe to parents for that inconvenience.

But parents started to ask themselves, why would mild-mannered, middle-income, predominantly women teachers leave their classrooms, leave the students that they have dedicated their lives to, risk being found to be taking part

in an illegal action and give up \$2,000 in pay? Parents began to ask themselves, "Why would they do that?" That was when they realized that Bill 160 was nothing more than an attempt by this government to provoke, to antagonize, to intimidate and to inflame teachers. It was a smokescreen to permit them to pull out hundreds of millions of dollars from the education system. Parents realized that this didn't have anything to do with the improvement of the quality of education. That was when the plan of Mike Harris began to unravel.

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People began to recognize that what this government is trying to do is facilitate a move towards charter schools in Ontario. That's the way we see this leading. The government won't admit that. If you ask them, "Do you agree?" on charter schools, they won't give you an answer. They'll skate all over on that issue. But we know that parents faced with a school system that is being deprived of resources are going to start to look for other alternatives.

We've seen what that leads to in Detroit, right across the river from the area I represent in Windsor. We've seen inner-city public schools deprived of resources deteriorating to the point where the quality of education is really unacceptable and people are moving out to the suburbs where they have charter schools. It's the privatization of education that we're concerned about, and that's what we see Bill 160 heading us towards. We need to stop that.

Clearly, with Bill 160 we can see that the gig is up for the right-wing zealots who have led the revolutionaries to the edge of the cliff. The NDP will be more than happy to push them over the edge. We'll be doing that in the coming years.

Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls): I have a lot of things I want to get to and I won't have the time to do it, but I had to rise and defend the third party a little bit from the member from the opposition party who said they were inconsistent. Everyone in this House knows there are two parties in here that are consistent: the government party and the third party. They're very socialist and they're not afraid to say that. That's their position and you have to give them credit for being consistent.

The member from the Liberal Party accused them of being inconsistent. They may be, on this issue, a little bit. He pointed out why that's so. But let's talk about the Liberal Party inconsistencies. The Liberal leader in 1993 put forward a private member's bill that would have limited the teachers' right to strike. In a speech in 1993 Dalton McGuinty, the leader of the Liberal Party, argued that teachers' strikes often alienate children from the school system.

I'll quote from Mr McGuinty, the leader of the Liberal Party: "Apart from the days lost in school, I think it's important to understand that — I've been informed by a number of principals — some students simply do not return to school after a strike." He walked a picket line for two weeks, and Mr McGuinty said, "Stay out longer." Was he thinking about his own political fortunes at that point in time, or was he thinking about the kids? I'll let people at home decide that.

Let's also talk about consistency. Where are the Liberals on this? In all debates on 160 and 161, they've never said where they stood on 95% of the issues with regard to Bill 160. Why haven't they said? I'll tell you. On a TV interview, Mr McGuinty, the leader of the Liberal Party opposite — we want you to know him, by the way — said, "We don't have any specific policies right now." No wonder they won't give us a position; they don't have any policies.

After my defence of the third party, I want to say that there has been a ton of myths created around Bill 160. Many of those myths are still propagated today. The first person to come out and try to really dispel some of those myths, a third-party person, was in fact Dave Cooke the former NDP education minister. The member from the Liberal Party read several of his quotes. One of those was:

"It's not centralization; it's a definition of who's going to do what. There's going to be stronger school councils. There's going to be some decentralization to the school level. There's a clearer role of what school boards are going to do and there's a clearer role of what the Ministry of Education does, along with the College of Teachers and the accountability agency" — an independent agency set up by this government.

I think that's extremely relevant. The member opposite read the quote that the teachers' unions have opposed virtually every change in this system. One of their own, Herman van der Veen of Oshawa, a long-time member of the Canadian Auto Workers' Union, now retired, said that the protesters reminded him of both his union and the NDP. "It's always their way or the highway. I'm tired of these people telling me how to think."

So are a lot of other people out there. In fact, the Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association, also concerned about all the myths around Bill 160, put out their own paper to dispel some these myths, all kinds of myths.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: Order, the member for Sudbury.

Mr Maves: Let me quote from the Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association: "The discussion around Bill 160 is accompanied by much misunderstanding or misrepresentation of its content and meaning."

It really needs to be told. Many other people in the press have caught on to these myths. Here was one article that came out: "Myths and legends of Bill 160." Another one subsequent to that: "The truth about education reform. Exploding more of the myths and legends surrounding Ontario's Bill 160."

The Toronto Star even comes out with a December 3 story and says: "Myths still surround Bill 160."

We have to stop this misrepresentation.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I am going to try to bring some statesman-like qualities to this debate. I have listened to all these partisan rants from everybody in the House. I want to indicate that I think there are a lot of people out there who, regardless of what their political affiliation happens to be, have a very strong interest in education.

I'd like to characterize what has happened as not the way the government characterizes it. The government, or

the spokespersons for the government, would characterize it as a fight between the teachers of Ontario and the government of Ontario. In reality it is a fight between those who believe in a strong, vibrant, high-quality, publicly financed education system and those who do not.

I am sure there are people of all political affiliations who have a feeling that our education system requires the kind of solid support that the government of the day can provide on any occasion.

What happened was this government wanted to use Bill 160 to take money out of the education system. Already having removed \$553 million from the education system, the government wasn't content. It's unfortunate because I know some of my friends on the government side had to go to public meetings where they were told to say, "This has nothing to do about money."

Then the Premier conceded, after the document revealing the terms of the deputy minister's contract was put out that said she had to remove \$667 million more dollars from the education system — the government then shifted focus and said, "Yes, it is about taking money out of the system."

While a lot of people would like to see all of that money restored to the system, what they were particularly concerned about was that even more money was being taken out beyond what the government had already taken out of the system. They were looking for any savings that came from amalgamation or administrative cuts in terms of reduction of costs to be put back into the classroom in education. Unfortunately, the government saw it as an effort to remove more teachers from the system. You see, that's how you get the \$667 million out of it.

The minister admitted himself that at least 7,500 teaching positions would be removed permanently from the education system. I know some of the members think you're going to bring more young people into the system. These are permanent positions leaving. My friend from Lanark will remember the press conference Mr Johnson had in the hallway the last day of the amendments, when the media asked him how many positions will be leaving the education system. He said 7,500 on that occasion. He said that publicly to members of the press gallery.

My concern is that we're seeing a drastic reduction in the number of front-line employees, those who deliver education services, in this province, and that we're having boards of education reduced to simply rubber stamps in the province when in fact I think local people have wanted to have the kind of impact and the kind of control that comes at the local level. I know that some of the members are embarrassed by this because traditionally the Conservative Party has believed in that kind of local control, which I think has been beneficial to education over the years.

The Acting Speaker: The leader of the third party, you have two minutes.

Mr Hampton: In response to some of the comments that have been made, it's interesting that the government tries to cast the debate as either you're for Bill 160 and you're for the government's agenda or you're in favour of

the status quo. In other words, the government tries to say you're either in favour of taking \$1.5 billion out of the system or you're not, you're either in favour of laying off between 5,000 and 10,000 teachers or you're not, or you're in favour of a centralized system or you're not, that there are no other options.

One of the reasons I brought forward this bill is to be able to emphasize that there are other options. It was a very good royal commission that produced this report, For the Love of Learning. They outline a number of other options that are unfortunately not part of Bill 160, not part of this government's direction. They outline the need for a greater investment in early childhood education and for junior kindergarten. Instead, what has this government done? It has eliminated early childhood education and has cut junior kindergarten.

It is a report that talks about the need to form a new partnership between parents and teachers. What has this government done? It has attacked teachers and it has ignored parents. It's a report that outlines the need to make new investments in adult education, outlines the need to equip us better. What has this government done? It has cut adult education.

That is why I brought this bill to the Legislature: to outline that Bill 160 must be repealed. There is a better alternative for education in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker: The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

IPPERWASH PROVINCIAL PARK

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): We will deal first with ballot item number 3, standing in the name of Mr Phillips.

Mr Phillips has moved private member's resolution number 84. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

BILL 160 REPEAL ACT, 1997

LOI DE 1997 ABROGEANT LE PROJET DE LOI 160

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): We will now deal with ballot item number 2, standing in the name of Mr Hampton.

Mr Hampton has moved second reading of Bill 168, An Act to Protect our Children's Education and Defend Local Democracy.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

The division bells rang from 1204 to 1209.

IPPERWASH PROVINCIAL PARK

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Mr Phillips has moved private member's notice of motion number 84. All those in favour of the motion will please rise.

Ayes

Agostino, Dominic	Cullen, Alex	Lessard, Wayne
Bartolucci, Rick	Curling, Alvin	Marchese, Rosario
Bisson, Gilles	Duncan, Dwight	Martel, Shelley
Boyd, Marion	Gerretsen, John	Martin, Tony
Bradley, James J.	Gravelle, Michael	Phillips, Gerry
Brown, Michael A.	Hampton, Howard	Pouliot, Gilles
Castrilli, Annamaria	Hoy, Pat	Ruprecht, Tony
Christopherson, David	Kormos, Peter	Sergio, Mario
Colle, Mike	Kwinter, Monte	Silipo, Tony
Conway, Sean G.	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Wildman, Bud
Crozier, Bruce	Laughren, Floyd	

The Acting Speaker: All those opposed will please rise.

Nays

Baird, John R.	Hudak, Tim	Sampson, Rob
Boushy, Dave	Jackson, Cameron	Saunderson, William
Carroll, Jack	Johns, Helen	Shea, Derwyn
Chudleigh, Ted	Johnson, Bert	Smith, Bruce
Clement, Tony	Jordan, W. Leo	Snobelen, John
Danford, Harry	Kells, Morley	Spina, Joseph
Doyle, Ed	Leadston, Gary L.	Stewart, R. Gary
Ecker, Janet	Marland, Margaret	Tascona, Joseph N.
Fisher, Barbara	Martiniuk, Gerry	Tilson, David
Flaherty, Jim	Maves, Bart	Turnbull, David
Ford, Douglas B.	McLean, Allan K.	Vankoughnet, Bill
Froese, Tom	Munro, Julia	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Galt, Doug	Mushinski, Marilyn	Wilson, Jim
Gilchrist, Steve	O'Toole, John	Witmer, Elizabeth
Grimmett, Bill	Parker, John L.	Wood, Bob
Hardeman, Ernie	Preston, Peter	Young, Terence H.
Harnick, Charles	Rollins, E.J. Douglas	
Hastings, John	Ross, Lillian	

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 32; the nays are 52.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

BILL 160 REPEAL ACT, 1997

LOI DE 1997 ABROGEANT
LE PROJET DE LOI 160

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Mr Hampton has moved second reading of Bill 168. All those in favour of the motion will please rise.

Ayes

Agostino, Dominic	Cullen, Alex	Lessard, Wayne
Bartolucci, Rick	Curling, Alvin	Marchese, Rosario
Bisson, Gilles	Duncan, Dwight	Martel, Shelley
Boyd, Marion	Gerretsen, John	Martin, Tony
Bradley, James J.	Gravelle, Michael	Phillips, Gerry
Brown, Michael A.	Hampton, Howard	Pouliot, Gilles
Castrilli, Annamaria	Hoy, Pat	Ruprecht, Tony
Christopherson, David	Kormos, Peter	Sergio, Mario
Colle, Mike	Kwinter, Monte	Silipo, Tony
Conway, Sean G.	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Wildman, Bud
Crozier, Bruce	Laughren, Floyd	

The Acting Speaker: All those opposed will please rise.

Nays

Baird, John R.	Hudak, Tim	Rollins, E.J. Douglas
Boushy, Dave	Jackson, Cameron	Ross, Lillian
Carroll, Jack	Johns, Helen	Sampson, Rob
Chudleigh, Ted	Johnson, Bert	Saunderson, William
Clement, Tony	Jordan, W. Leo	Shea, Derwyn
Danford, Harry	Kells, Morley	Smith, Bruce
Doyle, Ed	Leadston, Gary L.	Snobelen, John
Ecker, Janet	Marland, Margaret	Spina, Joseph
Fisher, Barbara	Martiniuk, Gerry	Stewart, R. Gary
Flaherty, Jim	Maves, Bart	Tascona, Joseph N.
Ford, Douglas B.	McLean, Allan K.	Tilson, David
Froese, Tom	Munro, Julia	Turnbull, David
Galt, Doug	Murdoch, Bill	Vankoughnet, Bill
Gilchrist, Steve	Mushinski, Marilyn	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Grimmett, Bill	Newman, Dan	Wilson, Jim
Hardeman, Ernie	O'Toole, John	Witmer, Elizabeth
Harnick, Charles	Parker, John L.	Wood, Bob
Hastings, John	Preston, Peter	Young, Terence H.

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 32; the nays are 54.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

All matters relating to private members' business having been completed, I will now leave the chair and the House will resume at 1:30 this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1216 to 1330.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

TOM DAVIES

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): It is with a great deal of sadness that I inform the House today that Ontario's longest-serving regional council chair, Tom Davies from the region of Sudbury, passed away this morning after a very courageous battle with cancer.

The people of our region mourn with Tom's wife, Sally, and their children, Craig, Ward, Gordie, Susie and Scott. Their grief is our grief. Their loss is our loss.

Tom dedicated his political life, which spanned over 30 years, to improving the viability of our region. His main thrusts were our region's survival and its growth. Tom's ability to remain focused and to keep his priorities in tune with the common man is part of the reason that Tom continually was reappointed as our regional chair.

One of Tom's priorities was the youth of our region. He believed that our youth should be able to come home, to return to meaningful jobs, and he devoted his energies to ensuring that happened.

We in the Sudbury region owe much to Tom Davies for his focus, his dedication, his energy and his commitment. Tom considered our region to be his family. As a family, today we mourn his passing.

PRIVATIZATION OF CORRECTIONAL SERVICES

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): This government's orgy of privatization of valued public services is leading not only to chaos in communities across this province but, in the instance of its unmitigated commitment to the privatization of correctional services, is putting communities at risk. It proposes to privatize jails and correctional institutions across this province so that its corporate friends can make huge profits and so that the prospect of corrections and rehabilitation can be abandoned in the meantime.

I'm calling upon people across this province to write and call their MPPs with this message: "Don't jeopardize public safety for private profit. Warehousing hundreds of inmates in poorly staffed, privately run mega-jails threatens community safety." In this government's first experience of privatization, Camp Getaway up in Barrie, they left the keys in the van so the young offenders could drive away instead of having to jump a fence.

We know, as a result of the American experience, that private jails are no cheaper to operate. We also know that persons working in privatized jails and inmates serving time in privatized jails are at risk because of the laxer standards that privatized jails, motivated by profit, undergo. We say no to privatization of jails in Ontario.

EDUCATION REFORM

Mrs Lillian Ross (Hamilton West): The last few weeks have seen the piles of rhetoric over our government's education reforms, Bill 160, growing higher by the day.

Critics of our reforms don't want the public to know that our reforms will mean teachers will spend more time with their secondary students, the same as the average time teachers across the country spend in their classrooms.

Much is made by the special interests about sweeping powers that Bill 160 allegedly gives to the Minister of Education. In reality, the education reform bill transfers existing powers from the Municipal Act and places them in the Education Act. These are powers that former education ministers have always had.

Perhaps this is the reason former Liberal education minister John Sweeney recognized these powers are nothing new. Perhaps it's because Bill 160 is the result of the recommendations of the Education Improvement Commission, chaired by former NDP Education Minister David Cooke.

Whatever the reason, members of the opposition must begin to be honest with the public. Education reforms have been needed in Ontario for years, as the leader of the Liberal opposition acknowledged when he introduced his bill to ban teacher strikes.

Those on the opposition benches must be straightforward about what's really in Bill 160, since there is perhaps only one thing Ontarians want more than reforms, and that's honesty.

COMMUNITY CARE

Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Prescott and Russell): I would like to bring to the attention of the Minister of Health that more and more people are suffering because of cuts to hospital funding and to home care services.

I would like to quote from a letter I received yesterday from Angela Clark of Orléans, whose parents are 75 and 80 years of age. She wrote:

"My understanding was that this government was to do all possible to keep older persons cared for in their own home. Prior to my dad being admitted and released from hospital, my parents were receiving four hours of home care services a week."

On Tuesday, December 9, Mrs Clark was informed that as of December 22, three days before Christmas, her parents will be receiving only an hour and a half of home care per week: all this because of budget cuts. What a Christmas gift.

This government is cutting hospital funding, closing hospitals and sending people to be cared for at home at the same time Mike Harris is cutting funding for home care services. The Minister of Health should do what she said she would do: reinvest the savings from hospital closures in services such as home care. This situation must be addressed immediately in order to ensure that people like Angela's parents are cared for and families can get support from home care services as promised by your government.

HAMILTON COUNCIL

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I rise to bring attention to a major article in the Hamilton Spectator today which talks about and profiles the new members of our Hamilton city council. I want to add my congratulations to Dennis Haining in ward 3, Bill Kelly in ward 7, Duke O'Sullivan in ward 8, Ron Corsini in ward 2 and Andrea Horwath in ward 2. We've elected what I think is one of the best regional councils and city councils in recent history, and under the leadership of Mayor Bob Morrow and regional chairman Terry Cooke, I think we have a team that is ready to take on whatever this Tory government decides to throw at us.

Make no mistake about it: What you are doing to our communities is significant. Your downloading, for example, is going to put major pressure on property taxes and public services at a time when our constituents and citizens need them more than ever.

I would say to this government that this team of aldermen and regional councillors, along with myself and my colleague from Hamilton East, will continue to do everything we can to fight your mean-spirited, anti-community agenda at the same time as we point out the role of the apologists, in the name of Trevor Pettit and Lillian Ross, who just gave an example of that kind of apologist mentality in defending Bill 160, another piece of legislation that's going to hurt our community.

This is a team locally that's ready for whatever you decide to throw at them. No matter what you do to our community, we are going to survive and thrive, because Hamilton matters.

HICKS, MORLEY LAW FIRM

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean): On Tuesday, the member for Sault Ste Marie, hiding behind parliamentary immunity, stood in his place and made allegations against a number of people who lack a voice in this chamber and therefore are unable to defend themselves.

Referring to the law firm Hicks, Morley, he said, "...under the Peterson and Rae governments, the firm was left out in the cold."

In fact, according to public accounts, Hicks, Morley has provided legal services to governments of all affiliations. Check the public accounts for Management Board Secretariat. In 1989-90 under the Liberals, \$267,000 went to Hicks, Morley; in 1990-91, \$252,000; in 1991-92, the first full fiscal year of the new NDP government, \$420,000; in 1992-93, \$158,000; in 1993-94, \$264,000; in 1994-95, \$76,000. That's an average of \$230,000 per year under the NDP. The 1995-96 public accounts tabled by this government show a figure of \$216,000, 6% lower than the NDP average.

But those figures just apply to Management Board. Under the NDP, other ministries used Hicks, Morley, even the Ministry of Education, where the member for Sault Ste Marie spent five years as parliamentary assistant. In 1990-91 it spent \$55,000; in 1991-92 it spent \$49,000. Even a current member of the Premier's office did work for the Ministry of the Solicitor General under the NDP.

I do not just suggest the member for Sault Ste Marie should do better research before speaking in this House; I think he should stand in his place, withdraw his remarks and apologize for casting groundless aspersions on people who are unable to defend themselves.

1340

MALDEN PARK CONTINUING CARE CENTRE

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich): Lately we have been asking the Minister of Health if the minister would consider rectifying the situation in Malden Park Continuing Care Centre where we have chronic care patients who require, and who continue to require, chronic care levels because that is the condition these people are in. The minister has so far refused.

We would like the minister to answer a very simple question. The government must fund \$208 per bed for chronic care beds in Windsor. They will be funding these beds in Windsor, whether the bed is sitting in Malden Park centre or in a refurbished old wing of a hospital, at an additional cost of \$25 million. If the minister is insistent on not answering that very simple question — why would you spend \$25 million to refurbish for chronic

care beds when you currently have a chronic care centre with chronic care patients and where you need to fund \$208 per chronic care bed anyway? Why would this government use that kind of logic to overspend capital, let alone the amount of money we are going to have to fund-raise to refurbish another unit for a chronic care centre? I would like that answered by the minister.

I would also like the minister to take all of this into consideration so that she will rescind this decision, because it's simply the right thing to do.

MINISTRY OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): I want to inform the House today that this morning a provincial court justice of the peace fined the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources \$1,200 for violating the Environmental Assessment Act in the Temagami area. It is my understanding that this is the first time in Ontario's history that an Ontario ministry has been fined for contravening environmental laws. On September 11 of this year, MNR pleaded guilty to violating section 16 of the Environmental Assessment Act.

In October 1996, MNR permitted the construction of an access road to Cross Lake, a contravention of the Temagami comprehensive land use plan which the Tory cabinet approved in June 1996. Cross Lake forms an eastern extension of Lake Temagami and is home to a sensitive lake trout fishery that is threatened by motorized access created by the construction of the road.

This is yet another example of the Harris government running roughshod over the environment and taking the law into its own hands. It is a complete embarrassment, or it should be, that one government ministry has to charge another.

I am happy to see that the judge rejected the MOEE and MNR joint submission that MNR should not be punished for breaking the law. It's about time that this government stopped breaking the law and started protecting the environment instead of helping to destroy it.

BLOOD DONATION

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Simcoe Centre): Canada has a strong tradition of giving and helping those in need. One method whereby Canadians can continue to assist others is through blood donor clinics. Despite the current questions surrounding the Canadian blood supply, it is a vital part of our health care system.

During the winter's treacherous driving conditions, especially in my area of the province, Simcoe Centre, a well-stocked blood supply is an important aspect of community health.

Donating blood can become part of this season of giving. In Barrie there will be a number of clinics, including one on December 19, from 10 am to 2 pm, at the Army, Navy and Air Force Club on George Street. Members of my staff have volunteered to promote the

clinic and assist in providing the restorative snacks and beverages.

A few minutes of your time can help ensure that this holiday season can be celebrated by everyone, even those unfortunate enough to need emergency transfusions.

I know that other members of my caucus have helped volunteer at blood donor clinics in their communities. I would like to urge all members of this Legislature and of the community at large to remember to donate the gift of life during this holiday season.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): My question is to the Minister of Finance. Is the Minister of Finance going to be here? Does anyone know?

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): House leader? Here is the House leader.

Mr Phillips: I'll stand down my question for a moment.

The Speaker: That's fine. Stand it down and we'll go to the second question.

YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT

Mr David Caplan (Oriole): My question is for the Minister of Education and Training. Three days ago, Minister, I asked you a question about the career employment preparation program. You didn't seem to know a lot about it at that time, so I'd like to go over some of the facts again with you today.

In April, your government cancelled the Futures program and replaced it with your CEPP program. On October 10, earlier this year, you reduced the placement targets by 40%, from 94,000 placements to 50,000. You've cut the budget 17.5%, a total of \$42 million.

I've heard from many of the youth employment agencies, who've told me that this program has not lived up to your government's expectations. Clearly, Minister, this program is failing. Go on the record today. Tell me how far below your reduced target your on-the-job training numbers are.

Hon David Johnson (Minister of Education and Training): I can give the same response today that I gave earlier to the question, that the province of Ontario is investing about \$180 million this year in terms of youth unemployment to assist young people. Indeed about 141,000 youths will be receiving training, job experience. I might say the \$180 million is over double what the federal government spends in Ontario. The kind of problems that the government has encountered include the fact that the federal government has withdrawn some \$2 billion from the province in terms of health, social services and education grants.

The member opposite, being a member of the Liberal Party, may wish to consult with anybody he knows within the federal government. If he happens to know any

member of the federal government, he may wish to consult in terms of the federal level of funding. The provincial government has certainly invested a good deal of money, \$180 million, and helped —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Supplementary.

Mr Caplan: Your response tells me that clearly you don't understand that there is a youth unemployment crisis in Ontario today. You don't even understand the programs that your own ministry has run to address this crisis. Let me tell you a little bit more about the problems with CEPP. You've never launched the program. You've never advertised the program to the youth of Ontario or to the employers of Ontario. You say you're spending more money than ever on youth employment. Youth employment agencies haven't seen any of this increased spending. They see you spending \$3.5 million on attack ads on teachers and school boards. What they don't see is any attempt by your ministry to promote its own programs.

What do you have to say, Minister, to your own agencies that are asking for your help? Will you tell the House today when you'll be launching this program so that youth employment agencies can begin to provide desperately needed jobs and training placements for the youth of Ontario?

Hon David Johnson: What I would say is that to the degree that there is any unemployment in Ontario, that's something we need to work on, whether the unemployment involves young people, whether the unemployment involves people of any age within Ontario. I'm pleased to say that at least in the province of Ontario there has been leadership to the degree that some 43,000 young people have found employment in new jobs in Ontario. This, I might say, is by far the vast majority across Canada. Almost all the jobs for the youth have been created right here in Ontario and this government is committed to continuing the program, the reductions in taxes, the reductions in red tape, the encouragement to business expansions. Those are the best programs to encourage employment, not only in the young people but in all the citizens of Ontario.

The Speaker: Final supplementary.

1350

Mr Caplan: Minister, you can throw numbers around, you can pull them out of the air, but here are the real numbers: Youth unemployment in Ontario has grown from 15.5% to 17% over the same period last year to this year — Statistics Canada data. Your government cancelled the program and replaced it with CEPP because it was going to help the youth of Ontario. Your predecessor said that "unemployment among our youth is a very high priority for this government."

When will your ministry's actions live up to its words? You've reduced the targets for placements, almost cutting them in half. You've made it harder for young people to participate by eliminating everyone who is eligible for a federal program, by eliminating young people on social assistance from this program — they must go on Ontario Works — and ensuring that young people who are living and working even one day a week — if they lick

envelopes one day of work, they can't apply for your program. Minister, can you at least try to help young people? Will you commit to promoting your own program? Will you commit to changing the guidelines so that more youth can participate in your program?

Hon David Johnson: One of the proposals put forward by this government through the Minister of Finance was that the federal government cut the employment insurance premiums to \$2.20 for \$100 of insurable earnings to eliminate the EI premiums for young Canadians, because, as we know, the people of Ontario pay more than their fair share of EI premiums.

What you might assist this government in doing is to talk with your colleagues, with your cousins in the federal government and say: "Look, the province of Ontario is putting emphasis on youth employment — 43,000 new jobs in Ontario in youth — emphasis on job creation — \$180 million being spent, invested in our youth. Will the federal government get on board and cut the EI premiums for young Canadians? Will the federal government assist in this whole job prospect for young people?"

MUNICIPAL FINANCING

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): My question is to the Minister of Finance. The minister will know that the mayors, reeves, wardens and council members are all, right now really, gathered around their television sets waiting for your announcement on how much money you're going to be providing them for 1998. They had the false start in January when Premier Harris announced certain numbers. They were changed in May. Then they were changed again in August. Today we are going to finally see those numbers — 20 days before the fiscal year starts for our municipalities.

Somebody started a nasty rumour that because of a computer glitch they may not get those numbers today. I'd like the minister to tell us that isn't the case, that the government isn't kind of closed for business today, and that our mayors and reeves will indeed get the numbers they need to set their budgets for 1998.

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): I can tell you that it's not a nasty rumour; it happens to be factual. At 2 am this morning, as the Ministry of Finance was running off numbers, they did have a computer problem and they are, as we speak, running off numbers. The municipalities of Ontario will know where they stand tomorrow.

Mr Phillips: I love the government. Right now down at the Albany Club they're having their after-lunch brandies and they're laughing at you.

I blame myself a bit. I saw the minister yesterday at a press conference and he dropped this thing out of his pocket, "Ernie Eves's Municipal Dumping Numbers." I thought he would certainly have a backup. I was going to return it today but I could certainly send it over to the minister.

I assume that you run a government like a business. You must have had some backup. We've got literally

hundreds of municipal clerks waiting for these numbers. They thought they had them in January. They changed in May. They changed in August. But today they were going to be there. Tell us it isn't so. Surely you've got some backup system that could have produced these numbers for the municipalities today. Surely you haven't got kind of a "Closed For Business Today, Open Tomorrow" sign over at the Frost Building.

Hon Mr Eves: No, I haven't noticed any signs over at the Frost Building lately.

With respect to numbers, municipalities have been given numbers as the reassessment in the province goes along, as they are available. They have been given numbers as and when the Ministry of Finance can provide them with them.

The member may want to belittle the civil servants at the Ministry of Finance, who have been working around the clock now for about 36 hours, but I think quite frankly he's doing a disservice to the many loyal and dedicated civil servants not only in the Ministry of Finance but in the province of Ontario. He may choose to belittle their efforts of working now for 36 straight hours, but I am not.

Being a Liberal, I know it's difficult. Liberals don't deal in the truth a lot.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order. Minister, you must withdraw that comment.

Hon Mr Eves: I'd be happy to withdraw that, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: Final supplementary.

Mr Phillips: I'm sorry I made you bitter about all this. I know you're angry and you must be very embarrassed, and that's all understandable. But I say again to the community, here's the problem: They told us in January, "We've got the numbers." They released them, and they were wrong. As a matter of fact, the Minister of Education had to admit they were wrong. You just made a pure mistake of \$500 million. So again in May, different numbers, and they were wrong.

Today, finally, we've got our municipal leaders watching this government in action. They've already told us, by the way, they think you're in chaos. They've already told us that you're flying by the seat of your pants. What other conclusion can our municipal leaders draw than that this government doesn't know what it's doing? You yourself, Minister, announced this press conference for today saying the numbers would be here. If any business tried to run like this, they'd be out of business.

Tell me again, how in the world could you ever be in charge of a ministry where you don't have a backup set of numbers to deal with something as important and as fundamental as our municipal budgets for 1998?

Hon Mr Eves: It isn't the numbers that are missing. It was the computer capacity at 2 am this morning to deal with the numbers.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): Even the computer won't swallow the numbers.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): A virus.

The Speaker: I caution you, you're both out of order. Minister.

Hon Mr Eves: Mr Speaker, through you to the honourable member, he may find telling the truth a difficult thing to accept. We're kind of used to —

The Speaker: Minister, you've got to steer clear of this truth accusation; it's out of order.

Hon Mr Eves: I said he is not telling the truth. What's out of order about that?

The Speaker: No, Minister. Don't argue with me. Minister, that's not what you said. You must withdraw that comment.

Hon Mr Eves: What I said, Mr Speaker, was the member may —

The Speaker: Minister, I'm not in a debating mood right now.

Hon Mr Eves: I withdraw.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Minister, with the greatest of respect, I suggest you use more caution. I caution you now. I don't want to hear any more about it. The comment is withdrawn. You've got an opportunity to answer the question.

Hon Mr Eves: I withdraw the comment, Mr Speaker. I apologize.

IPPERWASH PROVINCIAL PARK

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): I have a question for the Premier. I want to ask you about police tactical units or police tactical weapons units in Ontario. In 1989, Mr Douglas Drinkwalter, a very respected person, chaired a review of police tactical units and he came forward and made a number of recommendations. He said:

"Containment is the key principle of tactical unit operations. Tactical assault is the last option considered. It is only an option when all others have been exhausted and action is necessary to save lives."

Then, recommendation 2: "The primary objective of all police tactical units in Ontario must be the non-violent resolution of high-risk incidents to safeguard human lives."

The OPP adopted these principles; in fact, they became their operating principles. Can you tell me why the OPP would have abandoned these principles at Ipperwash park?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): To the best of my knowledge, there's not a shred of evidence that they abandoned those principles.

1400

Mr Hampton: I think the facts speak for themselves. I think those facts were recorded at the trial, where an OPP officer was found guilty, that there was first of all no threat to human life at Ipperwash park and, second, there were possibilities of non-violent resolution at Ipperwash park. So the question remains: Why would the OPP disregard their own operating principles? Why would they disregard the results of this review, which very clearly

said, "Containment is the key principle. Assault is the last option considered. It should be used only when all others have been exhausted and action is necessary to save lives. The primary objective must be the non-violent resolution" of these matters.

The only thing that happened at Ipperwash park is that your special assistant said to OPP officers when they were present, "Out of the park — nothing else." Why did they —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you. Premier.

Hon Mr Harris: I think the former Attorney General should know that the very matter he speaks about is before the courts and it's inappropriate to comment.

Mr Hampton: This question is not before the courts. This is not a question before the courts at all. This is the question, why did the OPP abandon their own operating principles? The reason for the Drinkwalter report is that at various times in the 1980s police tactical weapons squads had shot some innocent citizens of Ontario — Mr Bastien in Windsor. I believe there was also a case of a police officer himself being shot and killed innocently by a police tactical weapons squad. That's why the Drinkwalter inquiry was held. That's where these recommendations came from. That's why the OPP adopted these operating principles. They didn't want to be shooting innocent citizens of Ontario.

The only thing that intervened was your direction, "Get the Indians out of the park — nothing else." Why would the OPP abandon their own operating principles?

Hon Mr Harris: To the best of my knowledge, the OPP have not. There has been no change, and what took place is before the courts.

The Speaker: New question, leader of the third party.

Mr Hampton: Speaker, I haven't had an answer to this question, so I think I need to pursue it with the Premier. This is the philosophy of the tactics and rescue unit. It's reflected in the training manual: "Resolution of all situations using the minimal amount of force." That's what the OPP tactical weapons group is trained with. "The practice of containment with negotiation to resolve situations is foremost in the practices demonstrated by the OPP tactics and rescue unit." That's a direct quote.

The only thing that intervened at Ipperwash park was your directive translated through your administrative assistant to a meeting of OPP officers and other civil servants, saying, "Get the Indians out of the park — nothing else."

Why else would the OPP change their operating principles in this situation?

Hon Mr Harris: There's not a shred of evidence to support your statement. That's why the matter is before the courts.

Mr Hampton: This is not an issue before the courts. The only way this particular issue could be answered, "Why did the OPP change their operating principles?" would be if a public inquiry were held, if we had an inquiry where this very important question could be asked. The question again that needs to be answered across Ontario is, given the Drinkwalter report, given the long-

standing practice of the OPP of containment with negotiation, why did the OPP change their operating principle? Premier, have you ever asked that question? Have you in your responsibility as Premier ever asked that question: Why did the OPP change their operating principle?

Hon Mr Harris: To the best of my knowledge, they have not.

Mr Hampton: What an incredible contradiction. It is clear at Ipperwash park that they didn't follow their operating principle. It is clear at Ipperwash park that the only thing that intervened was your directive, "Get the Indians out of the park — nothing else." So the question remains unanswered: Why did the OPP go against the Drinkwater recommendations? Why did they go against their own operating principles? Why did they go against their own training manual? That's a question that in the interests of justice needs to be answered.

Premier, will you call a public inquiry so that question can be answered to the satisfaction of the George family, to the satisfaction of the OPP who I think need to answer this question and want to answer this question? Will you call that public inquiry so the whole world can discover why the OPP operated against their principle?

Hon Mr Harris: I have answered that question, the commissioner of the OPP has answered that question, the Attorney General has answered that question and the Solicitor General has answered that question. What has not been answered is what went wrong at Ipperwash, and that's the matter before the courts.

CASINOS

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): My question is for the Premier. I've been trying this week, as have members of the news media, without much success I might add, to get your Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations to come clean on the contracts that gambling organizations are going to sign to operate the new Mike Harris gambling halls, the so-called charity casinos that you are determined to force on municipalities and local people whether they want them or not. Whichever gambling outfit gets these contracts, it will mean millions of dollars of gambling profits going into their pockets.

Paul Burns, your former staffer and the former aide to Minister David Tsubouchi, is representing RPC Gaming and suggesting that he has a contract to operate a casino in North York. Premier, would you tell the people of Ontario if your former staffer Paul Burns had anything at all to do or had any knowledge of the contracts or requests for proposals for charity casinos when he was in the office of the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): Not to the best of my knowledge, no.

Mr Bradley: Across the province there were referendums and plebiscites which were held where people expressed their view on charity casinos, as I call them, the new Mike Harris gambling halls. Almost universally across the province and often by wide margins they turned this down. Yet we have Mr Burns and apparently others

out there believing they have a special in or a contract, a done deal to set up charity casinos in these various areas. In the contracts that are about to be signed or are signed, is there a provision that makes them contingent upon the approval of the local population or, if not, why not?

Hon Mr Harris: My understanding is that no location can be located in any municipality without the approval of that municipality.

PRIVATIZATION OF CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): A question again to the Premier: We've asked a number of questions about conflict of interest, about your former staff, your political staff, former civil servants and consultants to the government. We understand that in the last year your government paid more than \$200,000 to a company named Partnering and Procurement Inc. The company was contracted by your government to provide an evaluation plan and develop a request for proposals for the design, construction, financing and operation of privately run prisons and jails. This is part of your new mega-jail strategy. We understand that a Mr Jim Robinson was the principal consultant who designed the request for proposals. We now understand that he left that operation and he is working for the private US company that is making a bid.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Question, please.

Mr Hampton: Premier, do you not see a conflict of interest here, where you bring someone in to design the proposal and then they go off and they —

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I've never heard of any of them. Sorry; can't help you.

1410

Mr Hampton: The Premier obviously believes that all you have to do to avoid conflict of interest is pretend that you don't hear about it and pretend it doesn't exist.

Here's the situation: This person was contracted by your government to design the request for proposal. So he would have had all the information you'd need to bid on that request for proposal because he designed it. He then goes over to a private company and is operating for them in making the bid. He's now working with a private US company that is making a bid on one of these mega-jails. He was interviewed by the media and said: "I've now terminated my relationship with the Ontario government. They're not necessarily going to utilize the strategy I developed for them." But then he said a moment later in the interview, "It's unlikely the government will seek procurement documents from any other company because we're the only one there."

The Speaker: Question.

Mr Hampton: When are we going to see real conflict-of-interest legislation from your government, real conflict-of-interest legislation that protects —

The Speaker: Premier.

Hon Mr Harris: I'm not aware of any of this. The Solicitor General may know. I don't know why you don't ask him directly, but since you've asked me, I'm not aware of any of those. We are, as you know, bringing in tighter controls. We have indicated what those are and we've indicated that everybody is to comply with those whether it's passed or not. Presumably they either are operating under that or, if it happened before, they'd be operating under your guidelines, which we all know were not acceptable or satisfactory.

USE OF CROWN LAND

Mr E.J. Douglas Rollins (Quinte): My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources. Constituents have asked me about the Lands for Life consultation process that your ministry announced earlier in the year. The use of crown lands is vitally important to the wellbeing of the province of Ontario. How are the consultations proceeding, and how can individuals who cannot make those hearings, attend the public meetings, be in contact with you and become involved in the process?

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Minister.

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Natural Resources): Thank you, Mr Speaker. I dimly remember the proceedings. I think it's to say, "Mr Speaker, through you to the member for Quinte." Is that correct?

The Speaker: That's good.

Hon Mr Snobelen: Thank you. The member asked a question that I know has been on the minds of many people across the province as they begin to become aware of some of the consultations that have gone on over the last few months in this Lands for Life initiative, where we are attempting, with the help of many people across the province, to do land use planning for those public lands. There is a balance, obviously, being reached between the use of those resources and the preservation and conservation of resources for future generations.

In my time, I have met with the chairs and some of the people who have been serving on the round tables for the boreal east, boreal west and the Great Lakes-St Lawrence round tables. I can tell you I am very encouraged by the enthusiasm of the people who are working on the round tables, the enthusiasm of the people who are making presentations to the round tables, and their dedication to the natural resources of the province. They also have told me that the technology and the information base the ministry has been able to provide have helped them do a very sophisticated job of planning the future of land use in the province.

Mr Rollins: Following this consultation process, what will the next stage be to develop these lands in that process?

Hon Mr Snobelen: Once the consultation process is complete — and there are meetings being held across Ontario, including southern Ontario, so that all the public can participate in these matters — we will go to a regional land use strategy, probably later on next spring, which will look at the very local circumstances and how to plan

for the use of very local resources. That will be the second phase in this two-phase process to make sure we keep the right balance in our land use strategy in Ontario.

DEREGULATION OF MOVERS

Mr Mike Colle (Oakwood): I've got a question for the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations. Without warning, your government has stripped away the requirement that moving companies, the people who move furniture and household belongings, and other cartage companies that had to be licensed to ensure that they had insurance, to ensure that they didn't have criminal records, that they weren't fly-by-night operators — you have now, through your government, removed the regulation that they had to be licensed.

How could this be better for the consumer? How would you feel if you were a person who was shipping your furniture across a city and you were dealing with a company that perhaps wasn't bondable, didn't have any insurance? Is this good for your consumer?

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations): I think we have to look and see what the context of this was. There was a hodgepodge of various types of ways of licensing movers across the province. One of the things we are looking at right now, in a comprehensive consumer protection bill coming up next year, is to address this problem, which is a very important problem. We are not without tools currently. We do have the ability under the Business Practices Act to lay charges. In fact, that's the vehicle in which we're exercising that right now.

Mr Colle: I think these moving companies, these fly-by-night operators, are thanking their lucky stars. The minister has given them a wonderful Christmas present because of the fact that they can rip off, they can not show up for jobs, they can do whatever they want, because they don't need licences. They probably will have no one checking them for insurance, no one checking if they've got a criminal record. It's a free-for-all.

As the minister in charge of protecting consumers, how can you sit there and condone this? Who will they call when their furniture disappears and never returns? Who will they call when their documents disappear? Who will they call when their parcels disappear? You've now made it a free-for-all. How is this good for the consumer?

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: The short answer is, they would call the same people they've been calling before, which would be our ministry investigators.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order.

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: To reiterate that, they'd call the same people who are in charge right now. We have investigators who pursue these matters, and they take it very seriously. Charges have been laid under the Business Practices Act; charges will continue to be laid under the Business Practices Act.

What we really need right now is a standard that will apply across the province, one that will protect the

consumer. What is in place right now was a hodgepodge of various types of rules. Some communities did not even have any licensing or any rules. We have a standard that we need to apply not only in the city of Toronto, but right across the province.

1420

MEMBER'S CONDUCT

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): My question is to the Premier. As you know, I've asked the Integrity Commissioner to look into some allegations concerning the member for Simcoe Centre, Joe Tascona.

My question to you today also concerns the same member, but it stems from completely unrelated issues which are not before the Integrity Commissioner. I want to ask about a letter you received in July of this year from Mr Tascona's business partner in Barrie. He raises a number of serious allegations about this member of your caucus, including falsification of official documents and shady business dealings. These are very serious allegations that were brought to your attention in July.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order. Member for Hamilton Centre, I just would ask for a moment, please.

Member for Hamilton Centre, the difficulty I have is that I don't see the direct link between the administration of the province and the Premier's office and the question you're asking. If it's a conflict-of-interest question, I ask you to put it as with respect to a conflict of interest.

You're getting into very uncharted and dangerous waters with respect to the language you're using. I would ask you, if you're going to put the question with respect to conflict of interest, that you put it. Otherwise, I would ask that you reconsider your question.

Mr Christopherson: I appreciate your concerns and I also appreciate the seriousness of the issue and the sensitivity, quite frankly. My question, as you will see, Speaker, relates to correspondence that was sent to the Premier and it's about his response, or lack thereof, to a citizen in that correspondence.

To finish my question, if I can, Speaker, understanding that you are listening closely: Premier, the letter you received in July raised a number of serious allegations, as I've already mentioned. I'd like to know exactly what actions you took to look into the fact that serious allegations were being raised about a member of your caucus.

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I don't recall receiving the letter.

Mr Christopherson: Premier, these were very serious allegations about a member of your caucus. They were raised by Mr Tascona's business partner, who went on to say in his letter, to refresh your memory:

"As a citizen and taxpayer of this country, I would hope to be represented by persons with respect for the laws and guidelines of our institutions. Looking back at my experiences, how can I, or anyone else, for that matter, have trust in him representing us in government?" He went

to you as Premier and Conservative Party leader, asking for "some help or input to resolve the situation."

You wrote back to him on July 16 with a pure brush-off. You said: "I can assure you that all members of the Ontario PC caucus enjoy my continued confidence and support. You may wish to apply to the Ontario legal aid plan."

Premier, why didn't you take any action when you were alerted to these serious concerns about a member of your own government?

Hon Mr Harris: I don't recall the letter. Perhaps it came into my office. Perhaps somebody responded. If you would like, I'd be happy to look at it. All you have to do any time is ask, and I'll look at it.

CASINO NIAGARA

Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls): My question is to the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism. As the minister is aware, Casino Niagara celebrated its first anniversary on Wednesday morning, and as a gesture of goodwill, the casino again gave something back to its community.

Last year, this government announced funding for an MRI machine for the Niagara area, largely through the hard work of St Catharines-Brock member Tom Froese. Yesterday, Casino Niagara committed \$500,000 towards the purchase of a new MRI machine for the Niagara region.

I know the positive economic impact that Casino Niagara has had on my riding, but could the minister tell us how Casino Niagara has impacted on both the region and the province?

Hon Al Palladini (Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism): I would like to thank the honourable member for Niagara Falls for the question. On the first anniversary of Casino Niagara's opening, I want to congratulate them on their great success. Niagara's success story goes well beyond dollars and cents. Casino Niagara has benefited the community and the entire region of Niagara as well. The casino project is responsible for over 6,000 direct and indirect new jobs in the Niagara region, and a total of 9,000 jobs in the province as a whole.

According to the Niagara business manager of the Royal Bank, between 1990 and 1995, the Niagara region had only seen two new major developments over \$2 million. Since the beginning of 1996, 26 new major developments are in the works and another 13 are being seriously considered.

In the last four years, four out of every 10 new homes sold in the Niagara region have been bought by casino employees. That means spinoffs in appliances, televisions and —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr Maves: There is no doubt, Minister, that Casino Niagara has had a positive impact on the region's economy, but some citizens have expressed concern about

possible negative impacts on the community. Could the minister tell us how the Ontario Casino Corp is ensuring that the safety of the community is not compromised by the presence of a casino?

Hon Mr Palladini: In order to provide a high level of safety for the community and the millions of people who visit the casino, the Ontario Casino Corp devotes substantial resources to security and law enforcement. The Ontario Gaming Commission, through a seconded Ontario Provincial Police contingent, provides full-time police presence inside the casino and maintains offices on site. Each of our commercial casinos directly funds 25 additional police officers to patrol the neighbourhood around the casino.

Niagara Regional Police have indicated that they have not seen a major increase in crime, and because of careful planning and measures taken by law enforcement agencies, people feel safer and more secure in the downtown area than before. I'm certain that municipal leaders of the Niagara region feel the same way, and many have said so. By implementing these measures we are ensuring the safety and security of both the residents and the visitors to Niagara Falls.

HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur): My question is to the Minister of Health. Since your Health Services Restructuring Commission came to Thunder Bay last year, we've lost 200 acute care beds in our city. The results, to put it mildly, have been disastrous. We have patients left out in the hallways, patients turned away because there are no beds available and over 100 nursing positions lost. In other words, the hospitals are more than full and patient care is declining.

The system is stressed to the point of breaking, yet the Health Services Restructuring Commission is requiring the Thunder Bay Regional Hospital to close 30 more acute care beds by the end of March 1998. Surely you realize this cannot be done without putting patient care at even greater risk.

Minister, you control the funding to our hospital system. My question is, in light of these facts, will you guarantee that Thunder Bay Regional Hospital will get the necessary funding so that these 30 beds do not need to be closed and patient care is not further dramatically compromised?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health): To the member opposite, yes, I certainly can appreciate the concerns that you have just indicated are there for your community and I want you to know that we are very carefully monitoring the situation in Thunder Bay.

As you know, the recommendation has been made by the commission that there will be a total reinvestment of \$68.7 million, and we will continue to ensure in the interim that the needs of all the patients and the appropriate funding will be allocated.

Mr Gravelle: Minister, we just need the assurance from you that there will not be more acute care beds closed in our community.

Let me move into another area. You have already acknowledged that the restructuring commission's directives were far too demanding when you recently authorized the reopening of 29 long-term beds at Hogarth Westmount Hospital on a temporary basis.

Minister, the long-term-care needs in our community have been vastly underestimated, and I believe even your own officials are now recognizing that. The fact is that this temporary designation is causing a great deal of anxiety because should you decide to close them again, another crisis will be created. It's become very clear that the Ministry of Health must work with the local community to come to a permanent solution related to our long-term-care needs.

Minister, will you withdraw the temporary designation on the Westmount beds and tell the people of Thunder Bay that you will not close more beds in our community and that you will instead work towards a mutually agreed upon sizing of the long-term-care needs in our community?

Hon Mrs Witmer: Yes, again I would say to you that we are in communication with the people in Thunder Bay and we are endeavouring to make sure that the needs of that community are going to be met, whether it's in the area of the acute care or whether it's in the area of the long-term care. We hope to have a permanent solution that we're able to share with you in the very near future.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): New question.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): Speaker, my question is for the Premier. I wonder if he's coming back.

The Speaker: I believe he is. Do you want to stand it down?

Ms Churley: I will stand it down.

1430

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE COURTS

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough-Ellesmere): My question is for the Attorney General. About a year ago you announced the creation of two specialized domestic violence courts, one in North York and one in Toronto. I wonder if you could update this House today on what has been achieved for the women and children of Ontario at these two courts, please.

Hon Charles Harnick (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): I thank the member for Scarborough-Ellesmere for the question. I certainly want to say that this government has led the way among all Canadian provinces in combating and prosecuting domestic violence. We made it clear to abusers that domestic violence is a crime and will not be tolerated in this province.

Today I'm pleased to report that at the Toronto court, where we've set up the project, prosecutors are now getting 50% more convictions than before the court was established. We're using new prosecutorial devices, dealing with evidence such as 911 tapes, photos of the crime scene and victims' injuries, as well as audio-video recordings of victims' statements to police, which have reduced the pressure on victims who testify in court.

As well, in our North York court, guilty pleas have increased from 30% to 76%, and more accused are getting treatment to help them stop their violent behaviour. The North York court is designed to break the cycle of abuse through early, intensive intervention with first-time minor offenders where there is no physical injury to the victim.

Ms Mushinski: I understand that these courts are expanding to six other locations across Ontario. Could you please tell us what the status of this expansion is?

Hon Mr Harnick: Three of the six new courts are already operational, in Ottawa, Durham region and Brampton. The London court started selecting cases earlier this month, and the Hamilton and North Bay courts will be up and running early in the new year. We've been able to get these courts working so quickly thanks to the cooperation we've received from our justice partners, including judges, crown attorneys, community organizations and police. They are all invaluable to the success of the new domestic courts projects.

Based on our experience to date, I'm confident that all six new courts will help to further combat the problem of domestic violence, while supporting victims of this crime during and after the court process. As well I'd like to say that we're looking at other locations, smaller court centres to expand this court to so that we can ensure that the best possible results are obtained as we prosecute in areas of domestic violence.

GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): My question is to the Premier. The environment conference in Kyoto is coming to a close and countries around the world have reached an historic agreement about targets for greenhouse gases. My question isn't about the targets today; it's about your loose lips and the conflicting messages you're sending.

You are critical of the deal. You said the targets are unrealistic and unreachable. How can you say that? What an embarrassment, that you would belittle a major accomplishment even before the ink is dry on the paper. A commitment was made in Kyoto by Canada, and Ontario was represented by your own environment minister.

Premier, which is it? What is Ontario's Kyoto commitment, with the Premier saying one thing when his environment minister is saying the opposite?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I'm surprised anybody has quoted me on a Kyoto commitment, given that I haven't been in Kyoto. I've been right here, lucky you and I, while the minister has been in Kyoto. I'm very proud of Canada's commitment to global warming; I'm very proud of Canada's commitment to reduction of gas emissions; I'm very proud of Minister Sterling, who undoubtedly, from all reports, has led the way for Canada, shaped the policy, taken the world by storm. In fact, all the reports I've had back are that it's Ontario, Ontario, Ontario, and Norm Sterling, Norm Sterling that have led the world in this.

The only area that I have been critical in — and certainly not in objectives; I'm not even critical of the

federal objectives which were set before Kyoto. I've been critical of those who set targets without laying forth the science and technology that are there. I had not commented on Kyoto. I'm happy to do so now.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you. Supplementary.

Ms Churley: That was an embarrassing answer. I still don't think the Premier knows what his position is. He may be making light of it now, but it is a serious issue and we have to get clarification here because we do have to make long-term commitments if we're going to reach those targets. It's important that jurisdictions around the world work towards reducing greenhouse gases to combat global warming. We have to set an example here in Ontario.

Premier, it really doesn't help that you are dismissing agreements just made as unreachable. That's what you said. "Unreachable, unrealistic, pie in the sky," you said. Premier, I'm going to say it again, your loose lips are belittling an important accomplishment for the environment even before the ink is dry on the paper. I want you to retract your statement and commit Ontario to fulfilling Canada's international responsibilities on global warming. Will you do that today and say that you will commit Ontario to those targets?

Hon Mr Harris: Given that it's Norm Sterling, the Ontario minister that led the world and led Canada to these commitments and these goals, of course. You know we are there. Let me tell you something further that we will do. We will lead the way with environmental technology so not only Ontario and Canada can meet commitments, but so the rest of the world can as well. We have constantly led the way in that.

I don't know where you're getting your quotes from. Maybe it was from the lack of science that was evident when the federal government said on the previous commitment, "Oh, the United States is doing this, so we'll one-up them." I asked: "Where is your research? Where is all of that that's there?" I think we need to question that, but the commitment is there, and listen, for Ontario it's a double commitment because this province is going to be mushrooming, growing, booming, welcoming new immigration that we'll need desperately to take up all the new jobs we are creating. So it's a double commitment on behalf of Ontario.

COMMUNITY CARE

Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Prescott and Russell): My question is to the Minister of Health. My office has been flooded by calls lately about the home care services cuts. Yesterday, this lady, Mrs Angela Clark, wrote me a letter. I even went to her home to pick it up for Mr and Mrs Verlaecka from Orleans. They were told that as of December 22 they will be receiving a beautiful Christmas gift. In the past they were getting four and a half hours of home care services a week. Her husband was admitted to hospital. Coming out of the hospital now they've been told that their home care services will be cut to an hour and a half a week.

All the time, Minister, you've been saying all the funding that has been accumulated from the hospital cuts will be going towards home care services. Would you guarantee that the home care services will be made available to those who are in need of it?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health): Mr Speaker, to the minister for seniors.

Hon Cameron Jackson (Minister without Portfolio [Seniors Issues]): I'd like to thank the honourable member for his question and would hope that if he has a specific case he bring any correspondence he has in the case forward, but I want to assure the member that very competent and capable staff of the Ottawa-Carleton CCAC are doing specific reviews of each of their cases. When I was in Ottawa a few weeks ago I met with the staff and the board and we discussed their ability to review, on a case-by-case basis, the growing demand in the Ottawa Valley. In fact, they indicated to me that those reviews would take them a considerable period of time and they are not as yet completed. I want to assure the member opposite that this government is still analysing the restructuring commission's recommendations with respect to expanded service in the Ottawa area and —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Supplementary.

Mr Lalonde: Minister, even though you are saying at the present time they're reviewing every case, let me tell you that even at Hawkesbury, Mr Lascelles wrote me a letter just yesterday. He was advised that his mother came out of the hospital. She was looking for a place, a senior citizens' home to place her. They didn't have the money. The answer was, if you don't have the money, if we don't have the money from the government, there's no way we could accept anyone at this Pension du Bonheur in Alfred. It's because of all the cuts this government has been going through at the present time.

Hon Mr Jackson: First of all, I want to remind the member that funding has not been cut in the Ottawa area. There's been an increase in funding to the community support services for the seniors and the disabled in the Ottawa area. As far as the province is concerned, we've had an additional \$100 million injected into the facility side, which the member referenced in his question, and another \$120 million put into community-based services like CCACs. In fact, the level of service in Ottawa is as high as \$96.27 per resident, whereas in Peel region it's only \$45.06 per resident. Ottawa is receiving its fair share.

I want to remind the member opposite that after 12 years of home care programs, finally we have a government that has a process in place to develop a common assessment instrument and equity funding to ensure that same levels of services are achieved —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): New question.

1440

TRANSFER OF PROVINCIAL HIGHWAYS

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): My question is to the Minister of Transportation. You would know that

decisions of your government have led to the transfer of numbers of miles of highways on to local municipalities across Ontario. I want to tell you about a situation I saw myself last Friday while in Kapuskasing.

Imagine I'm driving south on Highway 11 — I'll draw you a picture — and I'm following a Ministry of Transportation snowplow. As it drives south on Highway 11 and approaches Kapuskasing, it gets to the town border, raises the plow and the wing in the middle of a snowstorm, drives across Kapuskasing on Highway 11, and when it gets to the other side of the community it drops the plow, it drops the wing and it carries on.

Minister, you said you're going to do this as a matter of disentanglement to save taxpayers' money. Can you tell me how that particular move is going to save taxpayers' money or do anything to improve services?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Transportation): I thank the honourable member for the question. Of course I want to indicate to him and to the House that the road transfers were based on the basis that a lot of these roads that were in the provincial road system were in fact local roads being used for local usages. We are taking the recommendations of the Crombie commission, which in fact recommended that we transfer 9,500 kilometres of roads to the municipality; we're transferring 3,400 kilometres as of January 1. We think the local municipalities are in a better position to provide good road service for those roads.

Mr Bisson: Minister, I don't think you understand the situation. Highway 11 is the Trans-Canada Highway. It is not a local road. Highway 11 goes across Kapuskasing. Let me paint the picture for you. If you want to drive to Thunder Bay and you happen to be, let's say, in Cochrane, you have to drive on Highway 11 across Kapuskasing on the Trans-Canada Highway to get to Thunder Bay.

How are the taxpayers of the town of Kapuskasing or the taxpayers of the province of Ontario going to save any money by the method you're going through when a Ministry of Transportation snowplow lifts its plow, lifts its wing on Highway 11 and doesn't do anything to clear the highway, which is Highway 11, across Kapuskasing?

Hon Mr Clement: I would say to the honourable member that the whole process we are going through is to ensure that the appropriate level of government has the appropriate level of roads available to it for the local municipality. What I would say to the honourable member is that if Kapuskasing has a problem, we are quite willing and able to enter into some sort of agreement which is better for less for the taxpayers of Ontario. If they're got a proposal, I would be the first one to come and see it.

BUSINESS INFORMATION

Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Centre): My question is for the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations. As we see the level of overall economic activity in Ontario improving and getting much stronger, with more people working and fewer people relying on welfare, the number of people involved in small businesses, and

more importantly the need to access the province's online business information, understandably has also increased. Accessing information as it pertains to business materials, forms etc is vital to the daily operations of any organization.

Recently, I read a speech by Morris Klid, the president of Cyberbahn, and he stated that the joint initiative between Cyberbahn and the Ministry of Consumer and Commercial Relations has ushered in a new era of corporate searching. Minister, what has your ministry done to improve the accessibility to the province's business information materials?

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations): I'd like to thank the member for Scarborough Centre for the question. One of the features of our 1996-97 business plan was to improve remote access to the Ontario business information database. Since the time this was implemented, we've had such a high demand for this type of access that we have gone to the private sector and contracted with two private sector companies to assist us in providing electronic data. This is a good example of a good private and public sector partnership.

I had the pleasure to be at the launch of Cyberbahn last night and the speech —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Answer, please.

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: — that the member for Scarborough-Centre is referring to was by Morris Klid, who indicated that we need to provide that type of access to Ontario. Mr Speaker —

The Speaker: Supplementary.

Mr Newman: I guess we're streamlining question period and streamlining the way the government operates.

Getting this type of online access to business information is indeed a positive move for our province. In fact, streamlining the manner in which governments provide services and information is important and is a must, so the outcomes of these initiatives must be constantly monitored to determine whether or not we are succeeding.

Minister, can you tell me, as the member for Scarborough Centre, whether these new technological initiatives are indeed working?

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: As I was saying, I was at the launch last night of Cyberbahn, which was attended by the stakeholders, Cyberbahn staff and of course our ministry staff, all of whom were very enthusiastic about this initiative.

To answer the member's question, by the end of November 1997, clients using OnCorp, which is our other partner, and Cyberbahn's services accounted for about 21% of the requests to the company's branch.

What I want to indicate as well is that this is an initiative that has created new — it's a small company; it's great for us to announce large companies, lots of jobs, but a lot of the private sector small companies are very important to us as well. This created seven new jobs in the private sector, all of whom are very proud to work with the Ontario government in an initiative which is going to provide better access to people in Ontario.

PETITIONS

EDUCATION REFORM

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the government of Ontario has not listened to the public on Bill 160; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario has chosen to make it unclear to the people of Ontario as to the true objectives of Bill 160; and

"Whereas we, the people, believe that no government has a mandate to act in isolation of the wishes of the electorate of this province and we have lost confidence in the government;

"We, the undersigned electors of Ontario, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to petition the Lieutenant Governor to dissolve the Legislature and call a general election forthwith."

I affix my signature to this petition.

PRIVATIZATION OF CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): I have a petition, one of thousands addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and to Solicitor General Bob Runciman. It says:

"Don't jeopardize public safety for private profit. Warehousing hundreds of inmates in poorly staffed, privately run mega-jails threatens community safety. Private jails have lax security. Two young offenders escaped from Ontario's first private boot camp the day it was to officially open.

"Private jails are no cheaper to operate, according to an August 1996 report by the General Accounting Office of the US Congress.

"Private jails abuse inmates. The FBI is investigating Texas prison operator Capital Correctional Services Inc following the release of a videotape of private guards beating inmates.

"Keep Ontario's jails safe inside so the community can be safe outside. Keep our jails public and professional."

That's signed by Ed Gould. It's one of thousands in my possession.

BEAR HUNTING

Mr Bill Murdoch (Grey-Owen Sound): I have a petition to the Parliament of Ontario.

"Whereas black bear populations in Ontario are healthy with between 75,000 and 100,000 animals and their numbers are stable or increasing in many areas of the province; and

"Whereas black bear hunting is enjoyed by over 20,000 hunters annually in Ontario and black bears are a well-managed renewable resource; and

"Whereas hunting regulations are based on sustained-yield principles and all forms of hunting are needed to optimize the benefits associated with hunting; and

"Whereas the value of the spring bear hunt to tourist operators in northern Ontario is \$30 million annually, generating about 500 person-years of employment; and

"Whereas animal rights activists have launched a campaign of misinformation and emotional rhetoric to ban bear hunting and to end our hunting heritage in Ontario, ignoring the enormous impact this would have on the people of Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ontario government protect our hunting heritage and continue to support all current forms of black bear hunting."

This is signed by many people across my riding.

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly from the Concerned Citizens for Eco Education. It says:

"We, the undersigned, firmly believe that now is the time to ensure that our province's school boards and schools develop environmental literacy through an appropriate curriculum for all Ontarians. By advocating environmental literacy for all future learners, guiding them from awareness to knowledge to responsible action, we will develop citizens who are capable of making informed decisions. By recognizing the need for a strong environmental component throughout the curriculum of Ontario's schools, we are stating that the natural environment is central to the continuance of our health, prosperity and even existence on this planet. All species are interconnected within our biosphere.

"The viability of a sustainable future necessitates education in the environment. Therefore, environmental education shall be integrated throughout the Ontario school system."

This was circulated by the Manitoulin Nature Club, and I'm proud to affix my signature.

1450

ABORTION

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton North): I have a petition here.

"Whereas we, the undersigned, believe in the sanctity of life, from conception to natural death; and

"Whereas pregnancy is not an illness; and

"Whereas the freedom to speak against the abortion of innocent and silent human beings is being subverted by prosecuting conscientious objectors to abortion;

"Therefore, we petition the government of Ontario to stop the funding of abortion clinics; stop funding doctors for performing abortions and stop their insurance premiums; do not fund schools of abortion; and stop the prosecution of conscientious objectors before the courts."

I sign my signature to that.

EDUCATION FINANCING

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough North): I have a petition from thousands and thousands of people in my constituency who continue sending petitions. It reads like this:

"Whereas the Ontario government wants to take an additional \$1 billion out of the education system this year and every year; and

"Whereas the Ontario government has decided to hire uncertified teachers in kindergarten, libraries, for guidance, physical education, the arts and technology; and

"Whereas the Ontario government wishes to remove the right to negotiate working conditions; and

"Whereas the Ontario government would remove at least 10,000 teachers from classrooms across the province; and

"Whereas the Ontario government has become the sole decision-maker on class size, preparation time and the length of the school day; and

"Whereas the Ontario government proposes to take decision-making powers out of the hands of locally elected community-minded trustees,

"We, the undersigned Ontario residents, strongly urge the government to repeal Bill 160 and create an accessible public consultation process for students, parents, teachers and school board administrators to study alternative solutions that have universal appeal and will lead to an improved educational system."

I affix my signature in full agreement.

COURT DECISION

Mr Bob Wood (London South): I have a petition signed by 45 people.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the courts have ruled that women have the lawful right to go topless in public; and

"Whereas the Liberal government of Canada has the power to change the Criminal Code to reinstate such public nudity as an offence;

"We, the undersigned, respectfully petition the government of Ontario to pass a bill empowering municipalities to enact bylaws governing dress code and to continue to urge the government of Canada to pass legislation to reinstate such partial nudity as an offence."

CHIROPRACTIC HEALTH CARE

Mr Peter North (Elgin): I have a petition to the Ontario Legislature.

"Whereas the Ministry of Health has recently strengthened its reputation as the Ministry of Medicine through its \$1.7-billion, three-year agreement with the Ontario Medical Association; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government is restricting access to alternative cost-saving treatments for patients of the province; and

"Whereas two recent reports commissioned by the Ministry of Health called for increased OHIP funding to

improve patient access to chiropractic services on the grounds of safety, effectiveness and cost-effectiveness; and

"Whereas over one million Ontario adults now use chiropractic services annually, increasingly those with higher incomes, because of the cost barrier caused by government underfunding; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government has shown blatant disregard for the needs of the citizens of Ontario in restricting funding for chiropractic services;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to recognize the contribution made by chiropractors to the good health of the people of Ontario, to recognize the taxpayer dollars saved by the use of low-cost preventive care such as that provided by chiropractors and to recognize that to restrict funding for chiropractic health care only serves to limit access to a needed health care service."

I affix my signature thereto.

RÉFORME DU SYSTÈME D'ÉDUCATION

Mr Mario Sergio (Yorkview): I have received another petition. It is in French, and I wish to read it to the House.

«Attendu que le gouvernement de l'Ontario est demeuré indifférent aux protestations du public sur le projet de loi 160 ; et

«Attendu que le gouvernement de l'Ontario a choisi de duper la population ontarienne en camouflant les objectifs réels du projet de loi 160 ; et

«Attendu que nous, les citoyens et les citoyennes de l'Ontario, croyons qu'aucun gouvernement n'a le droit d'agir contrairement aux désirs de l'électorat de cette province ; et

«Attendu que nous avons perdu confiance en ce gouvernement ;

«Nous, les soussignés électrices et électeurs de l'Ontario, demandons par cette pétition à la lieutenant-gouverneure de dissoudre la présente Législature et de déclencher une élection générale immédiatement.»

I agree with it, and I will affix my signature to it.

PUBLIC SERVICE AND LABOUR RELATIONS REFORM

Mr Ted Arnott (Wellington): My petition is to the government of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

"Bill 136 gives employers unrestricted rights to tear up collective agreements. It affects union rights, workplace rights and seniority rights of many working people in Ontario.

"For health care workers who have not had the right to strike since 1964, it takes away the fair and independent arbitration system that up until now satisfactorily resolved contract disputes between labour and management. The existing arbitration system also ensured smooth transitions in hospital mergers.

"With last week's announcement, the government of Ontario is clearly moving in the right direction on Bill 136. However, we have no guarantee of that until we see the wording of the proposed amendments.

"We, the undersigned residents of Ontario, demand that the Legislature of Ontario immediately make public the amendments to Bill 136 and hold public hearings on Bill 136 in communities throughout the province."

I'm presenting this on behalf of the member for Waterloo North, who of course is unable to present petitions in the Legislature.

EDUCATION FINANCING

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Parkdale): I keep getting hundreds of signatures against Bill 160 and for the repeal of this bill. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the Ontario government wants to take an additional \$1 billion out of the education system this year and every year; and

"Whereas the Ontario government has decided to hire uncertified teachers in kindergarten, libraries, for guidance, physical education, the arts and technology; and

"Whereas the Ontario government wishes to remove the right to negotiate working conditions; and

"Whereas the Ontario government would remove at least 10,000 teachers from classrooms across the province; and

"Whereas the Ontario government has become the sole decision-maker on class size, preparation time and the length of the school day; and

"Whereas the Ontario government proposes to take decision-making powers out of the hands of locally elected community-minded trustees,

"We, the undersigned Ontario residents, strongly urge the government to repeal Bill 160 and create an accessible public consultation process for students, parents, teachers and school board administrators to study alternative solutions that have universal appeal and will lead to an improved educational system."

Since I agree, I have affixed my signature to this document.

COURT DECISION

Mr Tim Hudak (Niagara South): I have a petition from the good people at Bethel Pentecostal Assembly in Fort Erie, and the Riverside Chapel and the First Baptist Church, also of the Fort Erie area. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario Court of Appeal has ruled that women have the lawful right to go topless; and

"Whereas the federal government of Canada has the power to change the Criminal Code to reinstate such public nudity as an offence;

"We, the undersigned, petition the government of Ontario to continue to urge the government of Canada to enact legislation to ban going topless in public places."

In support, I add my signature.

MALDEN PARK CONTINUING CARE CENTRE

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich): This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas it took 20 years and \$10 million in local donations to create a 225-bed chronic facility known as Malden Park; and

"Whereas this community believed that its donations were going towards the creation of a new chronic care hospital; and

"Whereas the Health Services Restructuring Commission recommends putting chronic care beds in Windsor Western Hospital, at a cost of \$14 million to \$25 million; and

"Whereas the funding levels for Malden Park have been deteriorating over the past two years;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to restore funding levels to Malden Park to the average per day rate for chronic care and designate Malden Park as a complex continuing care facility, which is what this community raised \$10 million for, and to save the \$14-million cost required to refurbish Windsor Western as a chronic care facility."

This is another in a series of petitions from my community. I'm happy to affix my signature.

1500

CANADIAN VIETNAM VETERANS

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Canadian Vietnam Veterans National Memorial Committee, a body created of Canadian citizens who served as Canadians in the American armed forces and fought in the Vietnam War, is building a memorial and is presently seeking land to erect a memorial in Ottawa;

"Whereas honourable Canadians believed that the principle of freedom was at stake and gave their lives fighting for freedom in a foreign land. The United States and Canada share a long history of friendship with one another throughout the period. Canadians and citizens of the United States have repeatedly shown their strong commitment to each other during times of war;

"Whereas the memorial will be a fitting tribute to these courageous Canadian men and women who sacrificed their lives serving as members of the United States Armed Forces in southeast Asia;

"The pain that is felt at the loss of lives in war may be eased by the knowledge that the deeds of those taken from us are not to be forgotten;

"For the devotion exhibited while in military service, each person whose name appears on the memorial deserves nothing less than our respect and admiration;

"Wherefore, the undersigned, your petitioners, call upon the government of Ontario to provide a suitable land site in the nation's capital."

I'm pleased to give it to Katherine Aukema from Brampton North, one of our great pages.

PRINCIPALS AND VICE-PRINCIPALS

Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Prescott and Russell): I have a petition here with a couple of hundred names. It comes from Wendover, Bourget and Hammond, a petition to rescind Bill 160's proposed amendment re principals and vice-principals.

"Whereas Bill 160 originally maintained principals and vice-principals would remain as members of the teachers' federations; and

"Whereas the proposed amendments were introduced after the hearings had been completed; and

"Whereas the proposed amendments will seriously destabilize the education system, causing unnecessary stress on our established school teams;

"We, the undersigned electors of Ontario, petition the Lieutenant Governor to withdraw those sections of Bill 160 which impact the current status of principals and vice-principals as members of teacher federations."

COURT DECISION

Mr Tim Hudak (Niagara South): I have more petitions from the people of Pentecostal Tabernacle in Port Colborne, St John's Lutheran Church, and the Graves church United Brethren in Christ. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario Court of Appeal has ruled that women have the lawful right to go topless; and

"Whereas the federal government of Canada has the power to change the Criminal Code to reinstate such public nudity as an offence;

"We, the undersigned, petition the government of Ontario to continue to urge the government of Canada to enact legislation to ban going topless in public places."

In support I affix my signature.

Hon Margaret Marland (Minister without Portfolio [children's issues]): On a point of privilege, Madam Speaker: As the longest-serving female member currently in this Legislature, it is with joy and gratitude that I wish to inform this House that this morning at 8:37 am, Valerie Margaret Marland was born to Laurie and Donald Marland, a sister for Hilary Ann and our sixth grandchild.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): That was not a point of privilege, but from one grandmother to another, congratulations on behalf of the whole House.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

HOUSE SITTINGS

Resuming the adjourned debate on the motion to extend the House calendar.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): The member for Sault Ste Marie.

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): I'm happy to pick up where I left off last night when I was unceremoni-

ously sat down with at least two minutes to go on the clock. I was making a very important point and I was cut off at the knees. There were two minutes left on the clock up here and they said it was 9:30 of the clock. I had 13 minutes left here. It's more of the attitude that we find here these days that —

Interjection: More Tory bulldozing, right, Tony?

Mr Martin: Exactly. It's the kind of attitude that we've come to expect in this place — even two minutes, which is really important to an opposition member who doesn't get much time to speak in this House any more, particularly since the rule changes. Every minute is really important.

Anyway, I was making a couple of points last night that I thought were really important. One of them was how disappointed I was that the members across the way weren't participating. We were going around in a circle, but the circle all of a sudden shrank and it was only the Liberals and the New Democrats. You changed the rules so that you would have more time to put your thoughts on the record. We want to know, and the people out there want to know, why it is you're driving this agenda. This brings me to the other point I was making last night, which was the fact that, for me anyway, if not for anybody else, a light went on. Can you imagine? A light went on.

Interjections.

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean): But nobody was home.

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr Martin: And a bell went off, yes. We're still waiting for the light to go on over there. You're living in the dark.

It says here, "The most crime-free era was when times were tough during the Depression. When times are tough, crime drops. So there is no relationship in my mind between poverty and crime."

We played a little game last night. The member for Cochrane South asked who they thought it was who said this, and of course it was the infamous crime fighter Mr Jim Brown himself. We extrapolated from that that this government actually thinks if you have more poverty, you have less crime, which explains the drive by this government to force everybody in this province into poverty.

Laughter.

Mr Martin: You laugh. The first thing you did when you got power back in July 1995 was take 21.8% away from the income of the poorest and the most vulnerable and the most marginalized among us. You thought that was somehow going to stimulate the economy, that was somehow going to move these people into the workforce. I'm here to tell you today that the unemployment rate hasn't dropped significantly since you became a government, which means there are still between 9% and probably 15%, depending on which community you're talking about out there, of people who cannot get a job because there are no jobs to be had, and they have to be looked after. They have to be given the wherewithal to put food on the table, to pay the rent and to clothe their children.

We had a report just last week, and I'm reading from the Sault Star of Tuesday, December 2. It says that the number of poor kids in Canada has doubled and it says Ontario's rate is the worst in Canada.

Interjection.

Mr Martin: That's right. Ontario's child poverty rate is the worst in Canada. That's what you're creating, child poverty.

It was only last night that I twigged to what the strategy was here. The strategy here is obviously that the more people you drive into poverty — because you guys have touted yourselves as the great crime fighters. We had a group of you out there yesterday announcing the new Ontario Crime Control Commission, where you're going to go out there and stop people from jaywalking and littering and publicly urinating, all the very important things that we as a province should be so concerned about. But really what we are discovering is that you think that by driving people into poverty you'll lower the crime level in the province. That's absolutely disgusting and alarming.

We are talking here this afternoon about extending the time that this Legislature sits so that the government can bring forward pieces of legislation that it's had sitting on the shelf, on the back burner, over the last two and a half years, that they haven't found in their drive to put Ontario into the situation that it finds itself in right now — a high state of anxiety, children in poverty, people sleeping on the streets of Toronto, older people out there being knocked out of their jobs with two, three and five years to go before their pension so that they can be replaced by, for the most part, younger, part-time workers with no benefits and no pension plan. This is what you're creating.

In your drive to do that, in your drive to put those tools in place that you're going to need to do that, you've left a whole bunch of legislation not dealt with. Today, according to the calendar we have in place now, should be the last day. We should be breaking today for Christmas and then the winter break and then coming back in March. But you have tabled in this House a motion to extend the sitting a week so that you can bring forward those pieces of legislation that you've ignored; so that you can, I guess, make up to those groups out there you promised legislation to, who are now in a state of some panic because you haven't brought it forward.

I speak, for example, of two bills that are of particular interest to the farming community, Bill 146 and Bill 170. Why weren't they brought in here after they were developed? Why weren't they brought in here two or three weeks ago? Why weren't they brought in here a month ago so we could all have the kind of time we need to take a look at them to see what impact they would have, both for the groups who brought them forward and for the wider public?

1510

For example, we have some concerns with Bill 146 from an environmental perspective. We would have liked to have some conversation about that so we could find ways to appease some of the anxiety out there around these particular pieces of legislation. We would have dealt

with it and found ways to make this bill satisfactory to everybody concerned, and in due time, using the process in this House which has been developed over a long number of years of bringing legislation in, having it debated at second reading, sending it out to committee so the public can have some input, and bringing it back for third reading, we would have worked it through the House.

That has been the pattern. That has been the way we've done business in this place over the years. But now, with the onslaught, the coming of the right-wing Harris machine in June 1995, it has been nothing but full force ahead with the bills they choose and see as being most important, and to heck with everything else. To heck with all the other things that need to be done out there to make sure that people can make a living. To heck with everything else out there that people need to make sure they can educate their kids, that they have health care when they need it if they're sick. To heck with the social safety net that we have all together, over a number of years, woven so that those who find themselves out of work for a time have a soft landing and can get back on their feet soon and get into the workforce.

That hasn't been important over the last two and a half years. Nothing was important except the rending of the public institutions that we've all come to see, those of us who are in any way rational or reasonable, as the foundation blocks of any civilized society interested in a future, interested in an economy that's stable, that includes everybody and produces opportunity for everybody who lives within its jurisdiction.

We're caught here this afternoon, and next week we will be caught again, having to deal with some bills that this government wants to ram through in its typical way, without any consultation and process. The two bills I raised, Bill 146 and Bill 170, are prime examples of that. We want to deal with them. Bring them forward and we'll deal with them, we'll talk about them, we'll address them. You're the government; you're in control. You decide what it is that we debate in this House, so bring them on. Bring them on and we'll deal with them.

Speaker, as you saw last night and I suggest you'll probably see again today, this government really isn't interested in bringing forward those bills that are of such tremendous concern to so many of the very important groups out there, because they don't want to debate them. They won't get up on their feet. They won't tell us here in this House why it is they want to do what they want to do. They won't talk to us in this place about what they're hearing from their constituents. I don't understand why they don't want to do that. I have some hunches about why perhaps it is. What their constituents are telling them is perhaps not in sync with what they themselves feel, so they don't want to have to put it on the table. But if you're elected by your constituents, sometimes you have to stand up for those who elect you, as Mr Carr from your caucus has done, because if you don't, this place is not well served and we don't have good legislation, and I suggest that at the end of the day, as a government you're going to feel the pinch as well.

Here we are on the Thursday on which, according to the schedule we have now, we are supposed to rise, debating a bill that will extend our sittings into the next week. If you're not interested in participating, if you're not interested in bringing forward those bills that are so important to the groups out there that we're all concerned about, at least on this side of the House, then perhaps we don't really need the kind of time that you're asking for in this place. Why waste all of our time here going through the motions, dealing with pieces of legislation that you feel you need in order to decimate the public institutions that support the kind of society we all want to develop, and not bring forward those bills that some of us take time out of very busy schedules to be here to debate because that's what we were elected for?

Therefore, Speaker, I'm now moving, on behalf of my caucus, an amendment to the House calendar motion that we have in front of us.

I move that in the third paragraph of the motion "12 midnight" be struck out and replaced with "9:30 pm."

I would ask a page to come and get copies of this amendment so it can be shared with the government and the official opposition.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr Martin has moved that the motion be amended to read — that in the third paragraph "12 midnight" be struck out and replaced with "9:30 pm."

Mr Martin: We moved this amendment recognizing that we need some time to deal with some of the very important pieces of legislation that this government has stacked over the last two and a half years and is now trying to ram through, but if the pattern is as it has been for the last couple of days in this place, that it is only we talking to these bills and the government is not participating, it seems to me that we don't really need the kind of time that was suggested in the first place and we should get on with the business of the Legislature and get this done, because I'll tell you, what's happening out there, what is unfolding on the streets of this province, is not a pretty sight. It's pretty awful.

I remind you again of what's happening to children and some of the reports that are beginning to be put together now after two and a half years of this government's destructive legislation. We have poverty among children that is unprecedented in Ontario. We have children going to bed hungry at night. We have children, now that we're coming into winter, who don't have the kind of clothes they need to keep themselves warm. We have families who used to be able to feed their kids at home now no longer able to because of the 21.6% you took away from their income. Imagine the hypocrisy: You take 21.6% away from the income of families and then you decide you're going to feed them all in school and develop breakfast programs.

I will sit down now and listen to others. Hopefully the government will speak on this.

Mr Bruce Smith (Middlesex): It's certainly a pleasure to have the opportunity to add comment to this particular motion to extend the parliamentary calendar, because it provides us the opportunity in part to reflect on the work

of this government to date and the dedication this government has demonstrated to the people of this province, not only to implement the Common Sense Revolution but to bring about a more accountable and more focused government in terms of the delivery of policy in this province.

It very clearly provides us the opportunity as well to talk about and reflect upon the work ethic that has been demonstrated here, not only by the government itself but in terms of the expectations of all members to be in this Legislature. They have been here essentially since January of this year to deal with various issues and to participate in debate on policy areas of concern to the government. Through that process, we've seen the commitment to a strong legislative agenda which, as I have indicated, allows us to reflect upon the accountability and a more focused government for this province.

It also allows us to look at the agenda in terms of the government's intent to bring about a more job-focused jurisdiction whereby job opportunities are realized and a positive job growth environment is created in this province. Those are very critical and important issues to the people of this province. It's an agenda which speaks to the opportunities to support small business and investment in small business across this province. All members of this Legislature know very well that small business is a primary generator of all new jobs in this province.

It allows us to look at opportunities for investment in youth employment, opportunities for investment in technology, in business research and development. It allows us to move ahead and look at opportunities for cooperative education tax credits and substantive and positive education reform in this province.

These are the very positive things the government has dealt with and continues to consider as we move forward into the future. We know that the opposition parties are anxious to continue in substantive debate, and from that perspective the Conservative government of this province believes that the time has come to move on to more constructive and substantive debate.

I move that the question now be put.

The Deputy Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): Point of privilege, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: I can't take a point of privilege in the middle of this.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion, please say "aye."

Those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. A 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1522 to 1552.

The Deputy Speaker: Would members take their seats.

Mr Smith has moved that the question be now put.

All those in favour please rise.

All those opposed please rise.

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 54; the nays are 26.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Mr Turnbull has moved a motion to extend the House calendar. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those who support the motion, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. A 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1555 to 1611.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): "Pursuant to standing order 28(h), I request the vote on the motion to extend the House calendar be deferred to the next sessional day." That's signed by Frances Lankin, MPP, Beaches-Woodbine.

GOVERNMENT PROCESS SIMPLIFICATION ACT (MINISTRY OF CITIZENSHIP, CULTURE AND RECREATION), 1996

LOI DE 1996 VISANT À SIMPLIFIER LES PROCESSUS GOUVERNEMENTAUX AU MINISTÈRE DES AFFAIRES CIVIQUES, DE LA CULTURE ET DES LOISIRS

Mr Turnbull, on behalf of Ms Bassett, moved third reading of Bill 63, An Act to simplify government processes and to improve efficiency in the Ministry of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation / Projet de loi 63, Loi visant à simplifier les processus gouvernementaux et à améliorer l'efficacité au ministère des Affaires civiles, de la Culture et des Loisirs.

Hon David Turnbull (Minister without Portfolio): I will be sharing my time with the member for Lincoln.

Bill 63 amends three statutes that are administered by the Ministry of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation. The general purpose of the amendments is to simplify government processes and improve efficiency with respect to three cultural agencies. I suspect that everybody would appreciate this to help the government to be more efficient.

The first portion of this act is with respect to the McMichael Canadian Art Collection. The act is amended to allow the board of the McMichael Canadian Art Collection to appoint and remove the director of the collection without the minister's approval.

The second portion is the Ontario Heritage Act. The minimum number of board members of the Ontario Heritage Foundation shall be reduced from 21 to 12. The amendments also provide that the board members will serve with no remuneration.

The third portion of this important act is with respect to the Science North Act. The act is amended to allow the Science North trustees to be reappointed for an unlimited number of terms, to allow the board to appoint a director and to fix employee salaries without the minister's approval and to allow the board, instead of the Lieutenant Governor in Council, to set the directors' remuneration.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Questions and comments?

Hon Mr Turnbull: I was going to share my time with the member for Lincoln.

The Speaker: Member for Lincoln.

Mr Frank Sheehan (Lincoln): The Fraser Institute study done in 1995 estimated that it cost Canadians \$85.7 billion a year to comply with regulations, regardless of what source. That's nearly \$12,000 per family of four. It also represents 12% of the gross domestic product of the country. From 1974 to 1994 alone, they passed over 100,000 new regulations.

Regulations aren't just what is printed in the documents. Regulations are a whole host of things that I will just recite. They include licences, permits, approvals, standards, registrations, filings, certificates, requirements, guidelines, procedures, paperwork, enforcement practices, attitude, service or other measures that are not truly needed to protect the health and safety of Ontarians.

Prior to the election in 1995, our government identified red tape as probably one of the most significant impediments to investment and job creation outside of the \$100-billion debt we're currently taking care of. I remind the House that we are borrowing just under \$1 million an hour to pay the interest on that debt.

Prior to our election, we had a record debt, record unemployment, a record number of people on social assistance and record lows in economic performance and growth. We've consulted with business and we've identified excessive regulations as one of the biggest barriers to job creation, investment and economic growth.

The Red Tape Review Commission was struck by the Premier in 1995 and gave us a one-year mandate. In that one-year mandate, we consulted with externals like the ministries, the cabinet and a range of stakeholders from around the community, whether they be business or institutions.

We began our efforts on red tape by designing a test called the Less Paper/More Jobs test, the purpose of which was to put a clamp on and inhibit any new regulations being passed while we were in the process of identifying a method of attack. We identified that one of the biggest changes we had to overcome or effect would be to change the culture, the expectations of the civil service and of their political masters.

Initially we were a little bit upset with the bureaucracy until it was pointed out to us that if you pictured the province of Ontario as a large corporation with 80,000 to 90,000 employees that had been the object of a hostile takeover perhaps three times in 10 years, and then you had a staff of 80,000 to 90,000 who had been outsourced, rationalized, downsized, bumped and otherwise just generally abused, whose philosophy of management are they following and who is really taking care of their interests? That put a different spin, a different light on the matter, so we conducted our affairs as we went forward in that light.

We must somehow or other change the culture of the bureaucracy and the politicians so they learn to consult in a sincere or effective way compared to past practices. Past practices seemed to be to put a notice in the paper or make

a press release, sit down and analyse the problem from inside and then pronounce, make the regulations, make the law.

The Red Tape Review Commission, in trying to get a handle on how red tape is created, arranged with the Minister of Health to see if we could work with his staff, his bureaucrats and the public sector and consolidate four pieces of legislation that affected long-term care. They had been striving to do that for over 10 years with very limited success — in fact, no success.

While working with the public sector and with the bureaucrats, we were able, in four months, to come up with a piece of draft legislation which we were then able to take out to all the stakeholders, get their reaction and input, and take it back and rework it. It is now at a stage where we're prepared to take it out again for a final consultation.

At the end of the game, we were able to introduce 17 bills of varying degrees of importance and non-importance. Some of them were key to the operating plans of various ministries. Most of them were just getting rid of stuff that hadn't been used in hundreds of years — I'm exaggerating, as you've probably figured out.

We have also come forward with 132 recommendations to various ministries which are currently being investigated for implementation. This bill is one of I think eight that are in the second or third reading stage.

1620

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): Why don't you call the others?

Mr Sheehan: We'd love to if you guys would give us a little cooperation.

The result is that these bills have repealed some 44 acts and amended 181 others. Effectively, what's going on is that one way or another we might drag the process of government into the 21st century so that it is responsive to the needs of the people and does reflect what they want and need and does respond when they ask for help.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Comments and questions?

Mr Gerretsen: I would just like to respond to what the last member was saying about the fact that the opposition was somehow to blame for these red tape bills not being called earlier. I would just like the members of the House and the public of Ontario to know that we have been asking the government to call these bills for about the last three or four months. We believe in reducing red tape that isn't necessary. We have asked them to bring these bills forward so that we can debate them one at a time and give them the attention they are due. For the government to suggest that somehow the opposition is delaying them from implementing some red tape bills that are actually for the good of this province is totally incorrect. I just wanted to say that because I think the member for Lincoln should know that we are always ready to debate any bill that the government brings forward. We in the opposition don't control that process. I'm quite sure the people of Ontario are wondering why the bell was ringing for half an hour,

and let me just say once again it is due to total government incompetence.

Can you think of anything worse than the Minister of Finance coming into this House and saying that he could not keep his promise to have a press conference today at 3:45. It said on all our televisions that he was having a press conference at 3:45 today to give the municipalities the new numbers. Then he said, "I'm sorry, the computer broke down at 2 o'clock in the morning." Even the computer itself cannot deal with the figures the government wants to put in there. The computer is rejecting your program as well. Can you imagine that? Here you are less than 20 days away and the municipalities still don't know exactly what their financial situation is going to be. I just wanted to put the record straight.

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): The member for Kingston and The Islands raises once again a most embarrassing phenomenon of this afternoon, a press conference, one that was of significance, we're told, to communities across the province, and all of a sudden — I'm not sure that I buy into a 2 am computer glitch. That was an awfully convenient computer glitch considering —

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): It sure was.

Mr Kormos: It's remarkable, that's right. Most of the folks I know have relatively modest little PCs at home. Their kids are working with them, and by God, they're not cheap, they cost a few hundred bucks for starters. We're talking about computers that cost millions of dollars that Ernie Eves is playing with. These little \$400 or \$500 computers you pick up at Radio Shack or Future Shop or wherever — not Wal-Mart, but Radio Shack, fine — don't crash at 2 am, and there are bright young kids operating them instead of —

Mr Gerretsen: They should have the pages operating them.

Mr Kormos: That's right. If the pages were in there working that computer, those numbers would have — I've got a feeling the government has seen some of the numbers and realizes, "Zonkers, this is bad news; we've got some massaging to do here." The problem is also incompetence. This government couldn't organize a drunk-up in a brewery. They just couldn't get it working. The period of the last several months shows foulup after foulup. Folks down in Welland-Thorold are saying this government is fouled. I'll leave it at that. I'd tell you what they're saying about you, but the Speaker would be terribly disturbed.

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton North): I am very pleased to make a comment on my colleague from Lincoln because he takes it to heart when it comes to changing the structure of government and simplifying the processes and getting rid of red tape.

To the comment from the opposition benches, anybody who has the absolute gall to say they never have a glitch in their computer system is absolutely full of that stuff that horses give us daily. With due respect to the farmers of this country, because they are very productive, unfortunately it comes too much from the opposition benches.

I support the member for Lincoln's bill because it truly achieves the objective this government is attempting to

achieve, and that is to simplify the processes of government.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I am glad this bill has not encountered the same computer glitch that has affected the Ministry of Finance computers which didn't allow the government to make its big announcement this afternoon as to how the downloading would really not affect municipalities.

I want to express sympathy, but I want to dispel a rumour. There is a rumour going around — and I know Gary Carr's mother who lives in Rexdale is very concerned because somebody has —

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke-Rexdale): It's called Toronto.

Mr Bradley: The member for Etobicoke-Rexdale calls it Toronto. She still calls it Rexdale. There was a rumour started somewhere — I don't know where — that Gary Carr had introduced a virus into the computers of the Ministry of Finance because of what he had seen and the downloading implications for his municipality. I wanted to dispel that rumour. That is not true. I want Mrs Carr to know that her son had nothing to do with it whatsoever.

With regard to this bill, I want to tell my friend from Lincoln, who represents part of the city of St Catharines, that I agree with this bill. I welcome its introduction into the House. I am confident it is going to be passed this afternoon because it is a bill which lends itself to the simplification of government, the simplification of process without causing any major problems. I don't think there are any job losses as a result of this. I don't think there is any harm done to society. In fact, I think it will simplify the process.

Mr Kormos: And no jobs created.

Mr Bradley: And no jobs created, mind you, as the member for Welland-Thorold tells me. But it is the kind of legislation where you're going to find a consensus in this House. You know how you always think we're negative on this side? I am really positive about this bill. I'm so positive I believe it's going to pass this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Lincoln has two minutes to respond.

Mr Sheehan: The whole object of regulation in the 1990s and the year 2000 should be to give the public some idea of clarity and afford them a degree of predictability and allow them to have logical explanations upon which they can plan their lives and plan their investments.

It always strikes me as fun around this place, as I sit and listen — I don't speak that often — to the member for Kingston and The Islands and my friend from St Catharines down there telling me about all this wondrous cooperation. I think if they want to do it — and they could also add it in with the spirit of Christmas and generosity — that it might be in order for them to get their House leaders back in here and give us unanimous consent on all of the outstanding red tape bills, all of which are equally as beneficial to the public. The whole point of these bills is that they've been prompted by the public, so our House leader might think he had died and gone to heaven if all

this spirit of wondrous cooperation happened and you guys said, "Let's have unanimous consent."

Mr Kormos: If he does, he ain't going to heaven.

Mr Sheehan: He isn't going to heaven? He's a Conservative. He's got to go to heaven. That's where all good Conservatives go when they're through doing all the good work they do for man and humanity, when they go about slicking up government and making it efficient and effective.

You know, Peter, you could really listen to what we're doing. It's a lot of fun doing things right. You'd enjoy it.

1630

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): I'll be sharing my time with the member for Port Arthur, who will be doing most of the presentation. But I just wanted to comment and let the House know that the computers at Science North in Sudbury have been working overtime since this government was elected in June 1995 because of the enormous amount of cuts that have taken place at Science North in its budget because of the Ministry of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation.

I might say that the new minister is very excited about visiting Science North. She and I have already spoken and she's looking forward to seeing the excellence which is at Science North, unlike the former minister, who had trouble finding the road to Sudbury. We missed that minister very much in Sudbury. She was there, I would say, about 1/100th of her time as a minister, which was not very much at all. In fact, there wasn't great communication between the minister and Science North.

We know, with this particular bill, and why we're supporting this particular aspect of the bill, that we're getting the government out of Science North. We think that's very important and very good. We see the people of northern Ontario being able to manage Science North in a very realistic, practical and meaningful way, unlike what was happening a little while ago.

With this bill being passed, it's going to allow for some stability in membership at Science North with regard to the board of directors. If you look back at the massive cuts that have taken place with regard to government funding to Science North, you have to thank and commend the director, Jim Marchbank, Colleen Zilio, Jennifer Pink, Alan Nursall, Tas Gregorini and a multitude of very dedicated staff people who picked up the ball and said, "I have to work with this board of directors we have at Science North to try to come up with some type of unique funding models and initiatives in order to ensure that the money the government took away from Science North is replenished somehow."

So when you deal with the board of trustees — Ms Patricia Anderson, Dr Anthony, Mr Ron Arnold, who has just been appointed vice-chair, Dr Bakker, Mr Bruce Caughill, Mr Jim Fortin, Mr Eldon Gainer, Mayor Jim Gordon, Mr Jim Hanson, Mr Robert Johnson, Mr Christopher Kallio, Mr Risto Laamanen, who is now the chair, Mr Mark Laberge, M^{me} Rachel Prudhomme, Mr Jim Simmons, Mr Mike Sylvestre and M. André Thibert

— we have to say to those people: Thank you very much for your involvement in the community. Thank you for showing that you care about Science North, that you care about the direction Science North is taking. Thank you for giving your time to the board. Thank you for being original. Thank you for wanting to make Science North the world-class facility that it is so that it continues to encourage people from all over northern Ontario, Ontario, and in fact the world to visit Science North.

Science North is a vital economic component of the region of Sudbury. With the passage of this bill we will have greater direction, greater opportunity and greater individual involvement of the people of Sudbury and northern Ontario in making the decisions for Science North. We see that as a plus.

It is a crucial component of the tourism fabric of northern Ontario. We would suggest that much more money from the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corp, for example, from the Ministry of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation, be reinvested and invested in Science North, because Science North has some excellent initiatives it is just waiting to implement, but it needs the help of government. It wants the government to be an active partner. That's why Science North continues to want to work with all components not only of government but of society in northern Ontario. In fact, now we're even international in our marketing of IMAX films and the production of IMAX films.

We want the people of Ontario to understand that by cutting some government out of Science North, we will be able to plan in a far more effective manner for the future of Science North. I want to commend the people who drew up the strategic plan for Science North. They deserve a whole lot of credit. Those people were the board of trustees and the staff — the director and his assistants — at Science North. They have plotted a direction that everybody who is a member of Science North or who knows about Science North should be proud of.

I'm glad that we will be supporting this bill that removes government from Science North. God knows that we've had far too much of a government that believes in cutting as opposed to enhancing. We're happy that we will be able in a far more positive way to direct and reach our own goals.

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur): I'm very glad to have an opportunity to speak on Bill 63 as well and absolutely support the comments made by my colleague from Sudbury in terms of the importance of Science North to northern Ontario and the fact that this indeed is a piece of legislation that we support for very good reasons. I think it allows the organizations that are affected by this bill to function in a much better manner.

We have a piece of legislation here that was first introduced in June 1996. One has to wonder why it took this long, a year and a half, to get to this stage we're at now when indeed it would have been very helpful some time ago.

As you know, Speaker, this is one of the bills that's part of the red tape review bills, and certainly while

members of my party are concerned with a number of this government's red tape bills, this is one we will support, and support quite happily. But there are a number of red tape bills that have gone forward already and some that will go forward that quite frankly allow a number of user fees in many different service areas that concern us. We have spoken about those in the past and we will again.

But I think this bill is important and it's certainly one that we can support. It's minor housekeeping changes that will have a real effect on the functioning of the organizations. The McMichael Canadian Art Collection and the Ontario Heritage Foundation and Science North are going to be improved by this process. In fact, my office had the opportunity to call these cultural agencies this afternoon, and they indicated that they wanted this piece of legislation to go through as quickly as possible and were grateful and happy that we were supporting it as well.

I might, though, use this opportunity to advise the minister in terms of the McMichael Canadian art gallery that the board of directors there certainly are looking forward to more significant legislative changes being brought forward from this government as it relates to some of this agency's other concerns. I would encourage the new Minister of Culture to meet with the board of directors as soon as she can to devise, hopefully, a new legislative framework that will truly help to assist them. I hope that will be something that happens very soon.

In terms of Science North, I think it's very important that this government recognize what impact the massive cuts have had on this organization as it is. The impact has been profound and it has made a great difference. The work done by Mr Marchbank and the board of directors and those who work there has been extraordinary, but there's no question that the cuts that have taken place have meant their programs, like the educational touring program and other outreach programs, have had to be cancelled. In fact, it was announced last month that a permanent Science North installation in my home town of Thunder Bay was going to be closed down due to those government cuts. Clearly this is a concern to me and to the many people in Thunder Bay who use the facilities of Science North.

I know my colleagues support me on this, and my constituents do. We hope that there will still be an opportunity to have Science North part of Thunder Bay. In fact, we are optimistic that as part of the redevelopment of our waterfront, Science North can at some point in the future have a permanent site there. We would like to think that with the right combination of private and public support, we could have an IMAX theatre in Thunder Bay as well.

Mr Speaker, I just want to let you know I'll be going to the member for Oakwood after my remarks are finished.

So we are hopeful that Science North indeed can come back to Thunder Bay in some form of permanent installation.

1640

I want to use the time, if I can, today as an opportunity to talk about some of the areas in the citizenship, culture

and recreation area that we have spent a fair amount of energy on in the last year and use this as an opportunity, quite frankly, to maybe give the minister a bit of a wake-up call and certainly indicate to her the concerns we have and the direction we hope she will go in.

If I may, I would like to begin with some mention of Bill 109, the Local Control of Public Libraries Act, which was introduced last January, as you know, by the government as part of the Who Does What exercise. This was a piece of legislation that gave us grave concern, for very good reasons. In essence, it would have eliminated the citizen-majority boards that we know are so important to the proper functioning of libraries across —

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough-Ellesmere):

On a point of order, Mr Speaker: My understanding is that the topic of discussion today is Bill 63, not Bill 109. I would like to suggest to the speaker that he confine his comments to red tape removal to help the cultural sector.

The Acting Speaker: That is a point of order, and I will monitor the member for Port Arthur and pay very close attention to his speech.

Mr Gravelle: Certainly I am very much connecting the fact that this bill is one that we support and one that we believe will help organizations such as McMichael and the Ontario heritage group and also Science North in terms of other cultural activities that connect, so I can't imagine that it would be considered out of order to discuss some of these matters.

In terms of Bill 109, I simply wanted to express that, as part of the Ministry of Culture's responsibilities, it was a piece of legislation that we had a great deal of concern about. It was expressed from the point it was introduced right up till when it was actually withdrawn, something that was certainly unprecedented by this government. The library community and those of us concerned about the public library system fought from the minute it was introduced to the point it was withdrawn to impress upon the government that the implementation of this particular legislation would have grave consequences for the library community. Despite going through public hearings and going through clause-by-clause looking for amendments and being unsuccessful, we are gratified and pleased that the new minister chose to withdraw it, and certainly I know the Ontario library community is pleased.

That does not mean I think we should not be monitoring the situation as carefully as possible. I think it's very important for the new minister to work very closely with the library community. The fact is that part of the withdrawal of that bill also included the fact that the ministry and the government agreed to continue to maintain a level of provincial funding for the libraries, which was an extraordinarily important part of that withdrawal, because we know for a fact that although many libraries only get a small percentage of their funding from the province and have the vast majority from their very supportive municipalities, there are many communities certainly in northern Ontario and in rural Ontario where the percentage of support they get from the province's funding was crucial to them being able to be maintained. We saw incidents where branches were going to be closed

and a number of things were taking place, so we are very pleased.

Ms Mushinski: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: As was suggested, this is a point of order with respect to the content of the speaker's recent comments with respect to Bill 109 and libraries. It was my understanding that the issue under discussion is Bill 63, An Act to simplify government processes and to improve efficiency in the Ministry of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation. The bill amends three statutes, dealing with the McMichael Canadian Art Collection Act, the Ontario Heritage Act and the Science North Act. I'm wondering if the nature of the debate, which seems to have wandered off into the realm of public libraries and Bill 109 —

The Acting Speaker: That is a point of order. I'll ask the member to have his debate wander back to Bill 63.

Mr Gravelle: In terms of Bill 63 and the agreed-upon and approved changes that are being brought through this legislation to the McMichael Canadian art gallery, to the Northern Ontario Heritage Corp and to Science North, we are very grateful, but there is no question that there is a cultural link. I find it a little bit strange that the member would object to me saying that we are grateful that indeed the government chose to take some action, which was to withdraw the bill. I find it unusual and passing strange that she would object to that, because that's simply what I was doing. The fact is that it ties in continually with the fact that this is a bill that relates to three cultural agencies in the province and indeed cultural agencies, certainly in the case of Science North, that have received significant funding cuts. I can't imagine that you would deem it inappropriate for me to talk about how funding cuts perhaps have affected the proper functioning of the organizations in this province.

If I may, in the realm of culture in general, one thing we have felt very strongly about is the need for this government and certainly the new minister — and we certainly asked the former minister the same thing — to think in terms of culture as being a far more important part of our province than indeed it appeared it was. There were, in essence, two and a half years of successive and cumulative budget cuts, which had a remarkably negative impact on the arts, cultural and heritage sector in the province.

As a result of that, one of the great pleas that we made, which again ties into Bill 63, if I may say so, was to in essence declare a Culture Matters Month in Ontario. We wrote the former minister a letter and rewrote the present minister a letter calling on her to declare a Culture Matters Month in Ontario, a Culture Matters Month that would obviously affect the McMichael Canadian art gallery and Science North. What we really felt very strongly was that there needed to be some significant acknowledgement of the importance of the arts, culture and heritage communities in our province that was duly noted by the government of the day.

In the letter we wrote the minister, we had a motion that was actually signed by all of my caucus colleagues, sent to the government side and actually to the third party as well. Basically the purpose of the motion was

essentially threefold: to facilitate a government-initiated process of working with the arts, culture and heritage sectors to promote the economic contributions and social value of arts activity to all Ontarians; to begin the process of constructive and positive government participation in the arts, culture and heritage community, particularly for the benefit of individual artists in the not-for-profit arts community; and we also asked the minister of the day to clarify this government's support for the arts, culture and heritage community by restoring funding to the Ontario Arts Council back to at least 1996-97 levels.

As you probably know, the Ontario Arts Council — which is an extraordinarily important arm of this government's cultural sector and provides funds to a number of major cultural organizations in the province as well as, and perhaps as significantly if not more significantly, to individual artists who are in the position of developing their creativity and having a chance to be encouraged to become the artists that very much will fuel our economy in the future — unfortunately received rather massive budget cuts. When this government came into power in 1995, the budget was \$42 million; it was dropped down to \$30 million the following year. Even though there was a commitment not to reduce that funding any further, unfortunately the minister was forced to reduce it to \$25 million in 1997-98. In terms of what the arts, culture and heritage sector means to this community, we think the Ontario Arts Council funding needs to be raised back up to at least that \$30-million level of 1996-97.

Certainly more significantly, we've heard very consistently from the arts community, including the McMichael Canadian art gallery and Science North, that what is needed, in essence, is a form of stability. The arts, culture and heritage community in this province very much wants a form of stability so they can know what they're doing. The truth is that the arts is an extraordinarily important part of our economy. One of the more difficult things seems to be being able to persuade this government that indeed for every dollar that goes into the cultural sector from government funds, \$1.23 comes back. There's a variety of ways of explaining this.

Mr Gerretsen: They don't understand that.

1650

Mr Gravelle: They don't understand this. My colleague from Kingston and The Islands points out that they don't understand this, and it's so very true.

We plead with this minister to look at the Ontario Arts Council, to look at funding for the arts and to return it to 1996-97 levels.

There are so many other areas and I recognize there is not a great deal of time left, but there is one other area I want to touch on very briefly. I appreciate the fact that with Bill 63 there was hopefully some consultation done with the McMichael art gallery, the Ontario Heritage Corp and certainly Science North. They recognized they needed some changes made. Some of these changes are being made and we're very pleased they are.

Another real problem we have seen over the last two and a half years has been the absolute lack of legitimate consultation with the arts, culture and heritage community.

Consultation is one of these things where this government's attitude tends to be, "We'll tell you what we're going to do and then we'll consult."

I have had the opportunity to speak to the new minister and she has indicated she will indeed consult with the community in a very different way than the previous minister did. I think that's very important and the arts, culture and heritage community is very much looking for that. They really want to at least be able to have the ear of the minister and perhaps something more: that when the consultation takes place and the discussions are complete, something comes from that.

There needs to be an understanding. This government needs to understand in a very real way, because it's simply the truth, that the cultural activity in this province is a phenomenal business in its own way. If you want to look at it from a business standpoint, the arts, culture and heritage community stands head and shoulders — we can view it from the point of view of tourism and how it brings it in and we can view it from the point of view of marketing. There's no question this government needs to look at that.

What they've done in the last two and a half years has been devastating, absolutely devastating, to the community. In some measure you won't have to go very far to find somebody saying that in essence it's been like a depression. We've seen theatre companies close down or we've seen them reduce their season. What we've also seen, which has been a great concern, has been the very negative effect it has had on the regions in this province.

The fact is the cuts that have affected the National Ballet are very important. We've lost a number of dancers. The National Ballet is not able to have as long a performing season; they aren't able to have as many dancers as they used to have; they are not able to put on the same kind of productions. We've seen this in various large organizations and I think that's a tragedy as well.

One of the real losses has been how it has affected the development of the arts on a regional basis. I've got a letter here from Theatre Ontario which wrote me in terms of the arts services organizations. The arts services organizations are very important organizations. They are cross-pollinating organizations, where they work together in essence to try and develop the arts in the regions. They have received massive cuts as well. Colin Taylor, the president, wrote to the new minister with some great concerns about it. As they point out:

"Our members are found everywhere: in rural and metropolitan centres, high schools, colleges and universities, from the Stratford Festival to a small community-based theatre in a village of 700, from mainstream to alternative to popular theatre practitioners."

"The ministry's arts service organization program has been cut by approximately 50% over the past two and one-half years" as the government has basically reduced its support for the arts. "Last year the program's clients underwent a very rigorous reassessment in the application process." They worked very hard to meet the assessment criteria and they are terrified that there are more cuts to come. The fact is, we just can't allow this.

As I wrap up, may I just talk a little bit about arts, culture and heritage in our schools. That's another concern. I'm sure all the agencies involved in Bill 63 would have some concerns about these as well, as I think we all do. There is growing concern among parents, educators and the arts community that this government's policies have threatened the development of future artists and future audiences among Ontario's children. The loss of Ontario Arts Council programs aimed at getting artists into our schools, coupled with the loss of opportunities to get school children into performances and facilities in their communities, in addition to the loss of programs at the local level, have contributed to a growing fear that this government's approach is squeezing out lifelong arts appreciation opportunities for Ontario students.

We certainly recommend to the Minister of Culture that she work with the Minister of Education and Training and try to do that. One of our concerns even about Bill 160 was the loss of support for the arts and music in schools. I have spoken to parents in my community of Thunder Bay, and they have told me about the loss of drama. They have told me about children. One particular gentleman told me about his child, who was extremely shy, and as a result of the creative arts he was able to get involved with, he blossomed.

It's not necessarily a question of whether you grow up to be a full-time artist — actor, performer, visual artist — it's being able to blossom as a human being that the arts and culture allow to happen, to be able to become the person you want to be and to have that opened up. That's what's being lost and that's the damage that's being done as a result of the government's attitude in the last two and a half years. I absolutely call upon this Minister of Culture to recognize that.

I am pleased to support Bill 63 and our caucus will support it as well. I am grateful to have had the opportunity to make some of the points I think are important to be made and, my God, there are more there.

May I say just a few words about TVOntario? We have had a public hearing process that's been going on out there on TVOntario. On June 26 the government said, "We're going to look at privatizing TVOntario." For months nothing happened. Finally, they put together a panel to go out there and meet with the public. The public meetings took place — extraordinarily strong support for TVOntario.

The other day I asked the Minister of Culture a question about how she felt about privatization and she wouldn't answer me. That's unfortunate. The Minister of Culture should be willing to publicly take a position in terms of TVOntario, because it's under her responsibility, and we have great concerns. Sheldon Levy, the president of Sheridan College, a very honourable gentleman whom I have had the opportunity to speak to many times during the public hearing process, committed to me that his report would be made public, that it will go to the minister and then be made public, so we call upon the minister of privatization and the Minister of Culture to be sure that this report is made public.

In fact, we ask the minister that his decision related to TVO be based on what the public says, because quite frankly, TVOntario belongs to the people of Ontario, and I think it's very important that the public input process be taken seriously, or once again there'll be a sense of what a sham it was.

There are many other areas I would happily get into. I appreciate —

Mr Hastings: Go ahead.

Mr Gravelle: I will go ahead. The member for Etobicoke-Rexdale says I should go ahead. Perhaps I should go ahead. There are a few more.

We've got some concerns about —

Mr Hastings: Stop while you're ahead.

Mr Gravelle: Is that what you said?

I will wrap up and give my colleague from Oakwood an opportunity to say a few words as well. Certainly we have concerns about the future funding aims of this government. We have concerns about lottery funds or proceeds that are coming out. We have concerns that rumour has it this government is actually thinking about making a further cut to the Ontario Arts Council, and rumours continue to persist that indeed they may get rid of the funding altogether — this is incredibly alarming — and that it will be replaced in essence by the funds from the charitable casinos.

This is of great concern to us. We'd sure like to hear the minister speak on that. What we need is a commitment that she supports the Ontario Arts Council, will not allow any further cuts and will consider raising the funding level back to 1996-97 levels. On that, I will wrap up. I thank you for the opportunity. We will be happy to support Bill 63 and I will happily sit down in favour of my colleague from Oakwood.

Mr Mike Colle (Oakwood): I want to congratulate the member for Port Arthur for his comments on Bill 63. As you know, he has a lifelong commitment to arts and culture and continues to demonstrate this every day. I will just be brief and eventually give the floor over to my colleague. Am I commenting now? I should be speaking, shouldn't I? On a point of order —

The Acting Speaker: This is further debate.

Mr Gravelle: It's part of our continued debate.

The Acting Speaker: If you want more time than that —

Mr Gerretsen: We have 50 more minutes left.

Mr Colle: Thank you. Again, as you know, this government has changed the calendar. Now they're going to change the clock too. What next? Perhaps they're going to abolish Christmas. I hope they don't do that.

1700

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): You remember that spring started January of this year.

Mr Colle: Yes. Christmas in January.

I want to congratulate again the member for Port Arthur, and I will eventually leave the floor to my colleague from Kingston and The Islands.

Bill 63 deals with the administration of three distinct parts of the Ministry of Citizenship, Culture and Recrea-

tion. I just want to make some brief comments about some parts of this bill.

As you know, the public has very little opportunity to know what is being passed in this House because of the rapid-fire nature of this government which seems to want to just get things through so quickly the public doesn't know what's in the bill. I think the public does care what's in all these bills. Maybe not every citizen in Ontario cares, but there's a significant number of citizens who do care about art, culture and citizenship, and they should at least have a minute to try and find out why and how this bill is important. If the bill is important enough for the government to pass legislation, the public should at least have an opportunity to know what's in the bill.

I just want to comment that this weekend I was involved with cultural activities from an area of Italy that came to visit Ontario, from Abruzzi. One of the interesting things they brought to mind was that whatever culture exists in other parts of the world can be reinforced by letting people in Ontario participate in activities that are brought to their community, the community here. One of the things I saw which I never realized before was — the group that came from Italy was a troupe of folk singers and musicians. I don't know the proper term, but one of them played the bagpipes.

Mr Gerretsen: A piper.

Mr Colle: It's the first time I've seen a piper from Italy, and I wasn't aware of the fact that there's a particular type of bagpipe that is played in the central region of Italy. I mention that because it shows a connection. Sometimes we think there's such divergence between our different cultural groups and roots. We traditionally look to the Scots as having brought that to Canada. We can see the connection, that even in central Italy that is an instrument that is quite popular and goes back generations. That enriches us all and connects us with our fellow Ontarians and makes us appreciate our fellow Ontarians more.

That is why this ministry is important, and bills that make this ministry reach out to people are important to all Ontarians. As I said, it makes us better able to get along with our fellow citizens.

If you look at the whole area of citizenship, I wish this government would take a more proactive role in citizenship, whereby good citizenship is rewarded and honoured and people are patted on the back when they do good things, when they help people, when they work in hospitals and old age homes, when they volunteer in schools. This government has very little out there that rewards these people. I'm not talking about the high-profile figures this government likes parading out; I'm talking about the average Joe and Joan Citizen, who aren't on any fund-raising list.

I have this one gentleman. He is 79 years of age. He delivers packages to the poor, door to door, at Christmas-time. He helps kids cross the street; he's not even a crossing guard. He is always ready to help out. He's 79 years of age. Perhaps this ministry should do something to promote — this guy's name is Mike Gillis. He is what I call a good citizen. Will he ever get any recognition from

this government? He probably will not, because he isn't a big shot; he's just an ordinary taxpaying — now he's a pensioner, but he paid a lot of taxes his whole life.

If you look at the McMichael Canadian Art Collection, we've had some turmoil and controversy about the treasure that we have here in Ontario, just north of Metro. Many Ontarians will sometimes say the government doesn't have to spend any money on art or doesn't have to pass bills ensuring that our collections and our art are appreciated. Well, the government should, because that has been the tradition of good government going back to the ancient Greeks and Egyptians and Romans, who put money into public art so you could preserve the traditions of that culture. You have to do it.

The private sector can't do it by itself. My own daughter is in second year, fortunately enough, in the Ontario College of Art. Through her I get a better understanding of how critically important it is to promote the arts, not only from an artistic and cultural perspective, but also from a commercial perspective. There are so many jobs out there and people who are looking for young people who have that kind of training and sensitivity. Art is not only, again, for the artist and it's not only, again, for a culturally enhanced society; it means good business.

The whole country of France or Italy, for instance — they are thriving art centres. People visit from all over the world, and they work and live in the art industry, in the culture industry. Here culture and art are always a side-light. This government, by its continual cuts to the arts and culture, is pushing them even more to the margin. But I think it's time for this government to stop being so punitive towards art and culture because hopefully they understand, as the member for Port Arthur said, that they are huge revenue generators. People come to Canada from every corner of the United States. They come to cities like Toronto and Stratford. They come because they appreciate what we've achieved here in art, in culture, in our museums, in our galleries and in our sensitivity to this industry. It brings money into this city, into this province, because we in the past have invested in art and culture. But not enough. It's still not enough. If this government continues to look upon it as a marginal area of interest, it is doing itself a disservice, not only economically, but also culturally.

It is incumbent upon this government to foster the arts — and not just token fostering but massive investment. There's a return for that investment in a systematic way. You just can't do it once a year. It's got to be an investment in young people, in those small theatre companies, in individuals who are trying experimental theatre productions. Give them a little bit of support. They will eventually give a lot more back to our cities and province.

If you look at heritage, this ministry is revising the Ontario Heritage Act. It's sad to say that the number of members on the foundation is being reduced from 21 to 12. Why not triple the members and bring more Ontarians into the foundation so they can all contribute? This government's even cutting the members to almost half.

The point I'm making is, heritage is another investment in the good things Ontarians have done in the past. If you

don't appreciate the past, you're doomed to live by the failures of the future. That is what is happening in this province. They're not investing in the traditional way Ontarians have worked, in the traditional way Ontarians have contributed. They are creating this brave new world, the post-Cromwellian period, the post-period of Maximilien Robespierre, the scorched earth policy where you wipe away everything in education, you wipe away everything in health care, you wipe away everything in local government. You do nothing but destroy and then rebuild to something that no one knows; and if the computers go down, they don't know what they're doing, as happened today.

We must preserve our heritage here in Ontario. Compared to Europe, it is a very short heritage but a heritage we should be proud of and investing in, and again, just like in art, culture and theatre, not in a token way. We should be investing in organizations, we should be investing in schools that promote history and heritage preservation, because if we do not do that, as I said, we will lose this heritage and our children won't have an opportunity to carry it on.

It's also good business to invest in our heritage and our heritage properties because people just don't want to come and visit a province that's nothing but glass, steel and concrete. They want preservation and they want to appreciate Ontario's history, and they will come here for that reason, because they can go to Dallas if they want to see nothing but concrete, glass and asphalt. But here we have some vibrant heritage areas that are second to none. Let's preserve them and let's invest in that. If you look at Science North — my own four little nephews from Ottawa took a car trip to Science North —

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Mr Gerretsen: Who are they? What are their names?

Mr Colle: There's Paul, Adam, Justin and Kiefer. Two weeks ago they went to Science North. It is ironic that we're talking about Science North here today, and I know the member for Sudbury is very concerned about the future of Science North with all those cutbacks the Tories have made to Science North.

These four young lads, just by coincidence, came back and they had glowing stories about Science North: "What a wonderful place it is to go and how Canadian it is. We're sick of Disneyland. We're sick of going down there with all those American things. We want to do Canadian things." These are youngsters. They're nine years old, 10, 11 and one is five. They said they want to keep going to places like Canada's north, to Sudbury to see Science North, yet this government has taken away that Canadian heritage. They should be investing and doubling their investment in places like Science North. Instead, they're cutting back on Science North.

What kind of government is this that doesn't see the value of its heritage, its culture, its art and its venues like Science North? Shame on them. Shame on the so-called Minister of Culture.

In conclusion I want to congratulate to a point the minister for introducing this bill. There are some remedial efforts here, thank God, but they're just a drop in the

bucket. They must get away from that destructive path they're on and start recognizing an appreciation of culture, art and organizations like Science North.

I hope they see the fault of their ways and listen to the member for Port Arthur. Now they're going to listen to that lover of the most historical city in Canada, Kingston, the original seat of our national government, the member for Kingston and The Islands.

Mr Gerretsen: First of all, I'd like to congratulate the members for Port Arthur and Oakwood for the tremendous, passionate pleas they made on behalf of culture and heritage in Canada and how it's very important for our youngsters to be part of that and to experience that, because only that will foster the true kinds of national feelings that we need in this country.

I've got to start off, though, by taking you back to June 5, 1996, a year and a half ago. That was the day, you may recall, when eight ministers of the crown stood up, one after another, and introduced their legislation to cut red tape. At that time we had Bills 61, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68 and 69 introduced. I will tell you that from this side of the House it was impressive to see one minister after another get up and say, "Ontarians, we want to cut red tape and we are doing something meaningful about it." Those bills were introduced on June 5, 1996.

Interjection.

Mr Gerretsen: No, not 1997, 1996, a year and a half ago. It's taken them a year and a half to bring these bills back, because since that time only one bill has been given third reading and that's Bill 61. If the government had only called these bills back earlier, then all the red tape they're talking that's the subject matter contained in these eight bills could have been dealt with earlier.

The question I have is, how serious was the government about truly dealing with these issues? They sat on them for a year and a half. They didn't have the nerve or the guts to call these bills forward so we could debate them one at a time; they just sat on them.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Order. Member for Oakwood, member for Etobicoke-Rexdale, order.

Mr Gerretsen: We seem to have a bit of a problem in the House currently, Madam Speaker. Thank you.

I will say to the citizens of Ontario that it's taken them a year and a half to call these bills back, so you just wonder how serious they are about cutting the red tape they're talking about in these bills.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: Member for Etobicoke-Rexdale, come to order.

Mr Gerretsen: Let's talk about an act that I care extremely about, and that's the Ontario Heritage Act.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Member for Oakwood, member for Etobicoke-Rexdale, order.

Mr Gerretsen: Thank you, Madam Speaker. For a moment there I couldn't even hear myself think, and that is pretty bad in this House.

The act that I really care about, which this new act deals with, is the Ontario Heritage Act. As has already been stated by the member for Oakwood, I come from a part of the province where we are extremely proud of our heritage, the city of Kingston, which is the oldest established community in Ontario. It was the seat of government from 1841 to 1843, and it was the first place in Ontario where royal assent was ever given to a bill other than right here at Queen's Park. As a matter of fact, the then Lieutenant Governor, Pauline McGibbon, came to our city, I believe it was in 1971, and she gave royal assent to the Ontario Heritage Act.

The other thing that is of note is that at one time in the city of Kingston we had as many buildings designated under the Ontario Heritage Act as the rest of the province combined. We had over 400 private and public buildings designated. I will admit that initially there were some people in town who weren't all that much in favour of the historic designations on buildings because they felt it somehow affected the value of those buildings or what they could do with those buildings, and not the entire community was in favour of it.

We then started the program, Madam Speaker — I'm sure you're interested in this — where we basically said, "All right, if you have a designated building, we will allow you to put a plaque up saying that you are a designated building." The plaques went up on the buildings, and do you want to know something? It increased the value of those buildings tremendously. All of a sudden people were saying, "Where do I get my plaque? I want to put it on my building," because the value of the property actually went up. So even from an economic value viewpoint, properties actually increased in value as a result of their designation.

We still have about 400, maybe 500 buildings designated in our city and there are probably many more buildings designated in the entire province. I think other communities as well have recognized the tremendous value of heritage that we have in this province and how we should foster it, how we should show it to our children, how proud of it we should be, and it can be a very large tourist attractor as well.

Therefore, I have some concern about the provision in this act, in Bill 63, that would reduce the number of board members on the Ontario Heritage Foundation from 21 to 12, and that the board members should serve without remuneration. I agree with that aspect of it, but I really do not understand why it was necessary to reduce the number of board members on the Ontario Heritage Foundation from 21 to 12 members. I would have thought that the greater the input you have on a voluntary board like this from various parts of the province, the better the ultimate decision-making is going to be. So I have some concerns about that.

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I think unfortunately this is all tied into this whole notion this government seems to be going on that if we just make smaller units, smaller management units, that is, whether it's fewer politicians as we see in this House — we've gone from 130 to 103 members after the next election — or whether we see it at the local government

level where in many areas the councils have been reduced by about two thirds when you look at the amalgamated councils, somehow we will all be better off in this community if we have fewer politicians at the local level, or indeed at any other level, to look after our interests, as if the politicians are the people who cost money in the entire system.

I have some great difficulty with that, because I firmly believe that the more varied the opinions you get, whether it's a local council, whether it's in this House or whether it's on the Ontario Heritage Foundation, probably the better decisions are ultimately reached in these forums, so I have some concern. I see that the former minister is here. I don't know whether it would be totally unparliamentary for me to ask a former minister to address that section in the act under questions and comments. Maybe she could give the rationale, or maybe one of the other government members, as to why you would go from 21 to 12 board members, especially since these board members serve without any remuneration. What is the magic about this? Is it the concept that as long as we bring all these boards and commissions down further and further, eventually one person can head them all and the notion of democratic decision-making will be gone completely? I don't know, but I would like somebody to explain that to me.

I hope this is not an effort by the government — I am suspicious, I'll be honest with you, as a result of some of the other things that have happened over the last two and a half years — to place heritage preservation on a lower rung in the priority totem pole for Ontarians, because I can tell you that the average person out there is extremely proud of the heritage and the culture we have in this province.

I think cities and town after town throughout this province have shown that as a result of looking after your heritage properties correctly, it will bring greater economic activity to those communities, it will induce tourists to come from the outside — not only outside of that community but also outside of Ontario — and not only from a cultural viewpoint but also from a pure economic tourist viewpoint, heritage preservation is a good thing.

I will leave it at that. I hope my suspicions are wrong. I certainly hope that this idea of reducing the numbers of board members from 21 to 12 is not some hidden plan to give the Ontario Heritage Foundation a much lower rung in the priority system.

I will now turn it over to the member for Parkdale, who also wants to speak for a few minutes on this bill.

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Parkdale): I have listened well to the members who have just spoken. Each one made a very specific point and I am delighted with their contributions.

In addition, though, what this Bill 63 is supposed to do is "to simplify government and to improve efficiency in the Ministry of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation." Listen to this: "to improve efficiency." But you can become so efficient as to be destructive, and that, to some degree, has happened here in this bill. We're going to support this bill, but in terms of the efficiency I want to put this House on notice that this government has been a

destructive agency in terms of removing a whole section of the Ministry of Citizenship, namely, Ontario welcome houses. Where are they today?

I know the previous government also removed some sections, to give it some historical perspective, and that was the area of multiculturalism. Within the Ministry of Citizenship we used to have — I was, of course, the first minister of multiculturalism the province ever had, but when that government was changed, the NDP, somehow being ashamed of multiculturalism, even took that very term out from the Ministry of Citizenship. That department was let go, the term was gone.

Then, of course, with this government, the Progressive Conservative government, we even take it one step further and say to the new citizens who are coming into Ontario and who are saying, "We want to participate in this country because this is the greatest country in the whole world that anybody can participate in, that anybody can live in." We all know that — and especially Toronto. We in this city have something very special and I'm afraid, as the members for Oakwood, Port Arthur and Kingston and The Islands pointed out, that this whole idea of efficiency, which we believe in, can however be taken too far. In this case it has been taken too far because we've seen the destruction of Ontario welcome houses.

Does that make sense? It doesn't. How can it? It would seem that the real money part, the real savings would be in getting people to work as quickly as possible. How do you do that? You work through the Ontario welcome houses. You say to the new citizens, or those who wish to become citizens and contributing taxpayers, "What can we do as a government to ensure that you can enter the stream of employment as quickly as possible?" That could be done (1) by learning a language as quickly and surely as possible; (2) by providing the skills of participation. That has been done awfully; that has been done in a way that has destroyed the whole aspect of it.

Here we have, in Ontario, a whole new area of dynamism that we could have used, a whole area that put Toronto on the map globally. All across the countries of the world we are number one. How did we get there? We got there simply because we have something special here. What is it that's special about this place called Toronto? It has to do with the Ministry of Citizenship. We have something special and what is it? It is that multitudes of people have come to Toronto and have applied a shoulder to the wheel for generations.

Not only that but we've become the model for others to follow because we get along with each other. It is this city that has become a neighbourhood of neighbourhoods. It is this city that has become a special place, and the Ministry of Citizenship is in the process of destroying this very fact. Yes, as the member for Kingston and The Islands said, we have to be proud of our heritage. We have to be proud also of our new heritage, the very dynamism that makes this city the greatest city in the world to live in, and that is at stake here.

So, my friends, I am saying to you, we together should be proud of this new Toronto. We should be proud not only of what we've achieved in the past, but what we are

about to achieve in the future. For you to do that, you cannot go and destroy the mechanism that has made this place great. I would think that the way you can make this more efficient, so that you can become taxpaying citizens in this country and save money, is you have to put in place the mechanism of participation.

Mr Colle: Welcoming people.

Mr Ruprecht: Right. The whole idea of participation is to welcome —

Mr Colle: Open doors.

Mr Ruprecht: — is to open doors, as the member for Oakwood says. It's an open-door policy and you can't shut it. While we're supporting Bill 63, you are in the process and you have shut some doors to some people. I'm asking you, be cautious of this. Don't shut these doors, have them remain open; in fact, welcome them in.

You may say to me: "Well, my friend, it's a matter of the federal government that is bringing in all these people who are not educated, they've got no money and they can't participate and it isn't our fault. Let the feds pay for it." We have a responsibility and the responsibility is on our shoulders because we want to continue the process that made this place great. The way to continue it is to have an open-door policy.

This cannot be a destructive mechanism that is about to take place. I'm cautioning you when I say to you, be fair with the new Canadians who are coming to this country because they and the next generation are going to pay for the greatness of this country.

In conclusion, we have to do two or three things. Number one, we have to make sure the Ministry of Citizenship gets the support it needs in the cabinet and in the government. That would mean it has to get a greater sense of importance because arts, culture, citizenship and heritage are important aspects of one's culture.

I'm reminded of what every historian knows, and that is, that we don't live by bread alone but we live by ideas, we live by religion, we live by other things that make this country great. If someone says, "Be fiscally responsible, that is our only religion and our only goal," that can also lead to some destruction and to some mechanism that makes and destroys this country.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

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Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): I want to take the two minutes to focus my remarks on culture in particular, and citizenship. There's some sympathy to the arguments many of the Liberal members have been making, but I want to say that the bill amends three statutes in this part.

The McMichael Canadian Art Collection Act proposes the removal of the requirement to obtain ministerial approval before hiring or removing a director of collection. If this is what they want, I say I can live with that.

The Ontario Heritage Act says the minimum size of the board will be reduced from 21 to 12. If the Ontario heritage board members are requesting this, as I believe is the case, then I say I've got no problem with that. If that is

their way of dealing with a number of problems they might be having as a board, I say God bless.

On the other aspect of the Science North Act, removing the limit on the number of terms a trustee of the board of Science North can serve, again, if they are requesting that, in my view it isn't such a big problem.

My point, connected to all of this, is not whether it cuts the red tape per se; rather, the focus should be on cutting. What this government is doing is cutting, chopping away at the Ministry of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation in a way we have never seen before. The real efficiency of this government is that they are about to abolish the ministry altogether.

They have eliminated \$20 million to \$25 million to the Ontario Arts Council from the previous \$45 million, \$47 million. It's disappearing; 60% of the funding has disappeared from the Ministry of Citizenship. I tell you, that is the real efficiency, not the cutting of red tape as it relates to some of these other agencies. This is where the efficiency of this government needs to focus our attention. That is the real problem.

Mr Bradley: Madam Speaker, what you should know affecting this bill is that the government has filed time allocation motions which to my knowledge are unprecedented in this Legislature and that, if accepted by the Speaker and if passed, will cause a riot in this House. I can assure you there will be grave disorder in this House if the government decides it's going to proceed with these particular time allocation motions.

For the first time that I have ever seen in this Legislature, we have a time allocation motion affecting this bill which puts six bills together so the government can slam six bills through at the same time. If they do this, then you might as well close this place down. Don't worry, the Harris crowd wouldn't mind having this place closed down and run like some corporation that they run themselves.

The people of this province should stand up against this. The bloody editors out there who don't think this is important, who don't allow their reporters to get their stories through on these issues because they're in-house issues, should know what this government is doing to Ontario and to the democratic system in this province.

If this is allowed to happen, then you might as well close this House down. I'm sure there are many members on the other side who would like to see this House close down. This is totally unacceptable. It affects this bill. It just shows that these people are the same intimidating, bullying people everybody thought they were. If you thought the fight over Bill 26 was something, this will make Bill 26 look like a Sunday school picnic when we're through with it.

It is totally unacceptable to see this happening, that you put all these bills together in one time allocation motion and one closure motion and then shut all the debate off. You might as well hand the keys to the province and that mace to the Premier of this province and let him run it like a parliamentary dictatorship, which it appears to be today.

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): Needless to say, I am finding this increasingly frustrating. To talk about these bills as red tape bills is something of a misnomer, and a thorough debate is essential to reveal precisely that. Especially Bill 63 in its own right has nothing to do with red tape. It's an entirely suitable bill. It's one that I looked forward to having a chance to engage in the discussion about because one of the points I wanted to make is that the province of Ontario doesn't begin and end at the intersection of Yonge and Bloor.

Again, I very much wanted the opportunity to talk about things like the Welland Historical Museum, the Welland Public Library, the Thorold historical museum and historical society, the Thorold library. Down in Pelham, once a year the Pelham library hosts a major exposition of history and culture from the region. I very much wanted a chance to talk about that to try to impress on some of these people over here with their Toronto obsession, their megacity obsession and their abandonment of small-community Ontario, their refusal to understand — and I don't dispute the value and the significance of the McMichael art gallery. I've been there. I've taken guests there. Science North: Again, I'm familiar with their operation and proud of it as an Ontarian.

But I tell you there are a whole lot of issues that relate to this so-called red tape bill, which it isn't, nor are most of the others. Most of the others simply give the keys away to those who would prey on consumers or other people in the community, permit self-regulation, and what that means is no regulation. You create a regime of caveat emptor.

Hon Mr Turnbull: I would like to comment on the delay tactics of the opposition parties with respect to the red tape bills. For many years I've been aware that people have talked about how much red tape there was around this province. We've had agreement from the opposition parties that these red tape bills are very modest and important to get through, yet at every suggestion we have had, every discussion with the opposition parties, they have resisted passing this.

It's very interesting that in a recent doctoral thesis that was submitted by the wife of a former NDP House leader there was a suggestion that delaying tactics were being used here in this House by the opposition, talking about how long it took to get bills through. In fact, the amount of time of debate on bills since we have become government has gone up exponentially. Any suggestion of us ramming things through is factually incorrect.

If one examined the actual numbers, one would find that the delaying tactics of the opposition parties have led to an unusually large amount, with no precedent in the history of this province, of the length of time of debate. We're not just talking about on an individual bill. We know about the delay of the member for Welland-Thorold when he debated against the Liberal government's auto insurance bill. We're also talking about the most trivial bills and the amount of time that is being spent. So the government has to use very unusual means to address this.

The Speaker: Response?

Mr Gerretsen: I'd just like to set the record straight. Of these two closure motions that have been filed, one, as my House leader has already stated, deals with six of the red tape bills that you introduced in the House on June 25, 1996. The question the general public has out there and that the members have is, why haven't you called these bills in the last year and a half? You had every opportunity to do it and you didn't do it. Now you've coupled them all in one omnibus closure motion so they can all be dealt with at once without any further debate. I say shame on you.

The second closure motion gets even better than that. Yesterday we had Bill 164, which implements a lot of the budget items that were contained in the finance minister's budget this year, a budget that was introduced some time in May or June. The bill implementing that took six months to get to the House. It finally got here about a week or so ago and now, after the bill passed second reading yesterday, it has been referred to the finance and economic affairs committee. The finance minister himself referred it to that committee. The closure motion here states that they will meet on Monday, December 15, "for the purpose of considering the bill and at such time the Chair shall put every question necessary to dispose of this stage of the bill without further debate or amendment."

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Now we even have closure motions that bills that have gone to committee can't even be debated there any more. This is an absolute insult to the intelligence of every Ontarian. It's an insult to the democratic process. How can you tell a committee that has never even looked at a bill, "You cannot discuss it, but you will pass it immediately so that it can be reported back to the House." This has got to be an absolute first for the province of Ontario and totally unparliamentary —

The Speaker: Thank you. Further debate?

Mr Silipo: There is much that can be said and should be said certainly on this bill and all of the reasons behind it, but as I look at the clock, which doesn't show the full time right now, by the way, I want to make it clear to the government members that we had indicated we would be agreeing to passing this particular bill, Bill 63, and we're going to do that. We're going to do that because when we look at the particular bill, we agree with the changes that are being made in here because if you want to talk about simplifying red tape, this is one of the few bills that actually does that.

We're going to support that because in the three parts that this touches, the McMichael Canadian Art Collection Act, the Ontario Heritage Act and the Science North Act, they are really taking out of the legislation things that, quite frankly, I think we could all argue probably should never have been there or don't have any place to be there. We agree and we're going to indicate that agreement by facilitating the passage of this bill today, as we had indicated to the government House leader earlier today, and before that, that we would do.

But let me be really clear: In doing that, we are also being very clear in saying to the government that when it

comes to some of the other so-called red tape bills, we have some fundamental disagreement with some of them because they're not about simplifying red tape. They're about deregulation and they're about stripping protections that exist now, so it's important we have the opportunity to debate those bills one by one and to deal with those bills one by one.

That's why we find abhorrent the actions the government has just taken in bringing in an overarching time allocation motion to pull all these bills together under the simplistic notion that somehow these are just simple administrative things that need to be done and can be done in one fell swoop.

No, we say to the government members, because our role here as members of the opposition is to watch over the actions of this government and, God knows, there have been enough indications when they have royally screwed up in terms of the process they have taken through this House. We've seen that again today in spades and we're not going to make it any easier for you than we need to. On this bill, we will pass it because we agree with what's in it and we agree it simplifies red tape. On the others we have some significant problems and we want to have the opportunity to address those issues.

I should just say, Speaker, as I sit down that my colleague from Fort York is going to take the balance of the time.

Mr Marchese: I want to have a few more moments to speak specifically on the issue of culture because it is something that has concerned me for some time. We are not getting the time to debate in this House as we used to in the past and that should be a matter of concern to many people because we are not permitted to raise issues as the public demands.

On the issue of culture, we have agreed that some of the matters that are raised there with the Ontario Heritage Foundation are acceptable to us; agreed with the McMichael collection, acceptable to us; and the science centre change is acceptable to us. But this masks what is really happening in those ministries. It makes it appear to those who might be watching that everything is all right in the Ministry of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation. The point I want to make is that everything is not all right. The ministry is disappearing. It has been reduced to so very little funding that it is virtually disappearing, that there's nothing to manage any longer. I argue that's the real efficiency of this government, that is, to eliminate virtually all of the funding that is contained in that ministry.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): A virtual ministry.

Mr Marchese: A virtual ministry indeed; virtual reality indeed because that's what we're talking about.

The Ontario Arts Council is one of the most important cultural institutions we've got in this province and in the country. With the \$45 million that we used to give, we used to provide funding for individual artists and organizations, organizations and artists and cultural workers who have very little money to do the work they do. When you take the funding away from these people, they are on their own, and what this government is saying

is: "God bless them. They've got to get out there and fund-raise on their own, and if they can't, too bad." With it, culture obviously disappears. They put no value on culture.

Money that we put in as the New Democratic Party to say that we value our cultural institutions and our cultural workers is disappearing under these people over here, and the Ministry of Citizenship is virtually disappearing, as I say. Some 40% to 60% of the funding from that Ministry of Citizenship, now combined, is gone. What are they managing? There is nothing to manage because the money is gone and people have disappeared.

It is a shameful, shameful act. It speaks well to the modus vivendi of this government, not just to speak to the cuts they are making but to speak to the dictatorial nature of the way they behave. As my colleague said, it's witnessed in this overarching time allocation motion they are bringing to bring all these bills together. That too speaks to the modus vivendi of this government, which is dictatorial in nature and ruling by fiat, ruling in such a way that we reduce the scrutiny and supervision that properly should be given to these bills, the supervision that is needed by the media, by the opposition and by those who are following our discussion. That's what it speaks to when this government introduces these kinds of motions.

It's nothing new. We have seen the behaviour of this government in all of its actions, through the amalgamation of the city of Toronto, through Bill 26 a long time ago, and through so many other measures that we have spoken to and we have no more time to address. But people understand the behaviour, the dictatorial nature of this government, and this other time allocation motion they are bringing in is further evidence of the behaviour of this government.

I want to leave it at that and allow time for people to respond to our remarks.

The Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Hastings: I'd like to set a couple of points and themes for the record. First, the member for Fort York talks about this government being dictatorial in dealing with this particular set of red tape bills. The reality is that if you look at some of the dates, they go back to June 1996 and they go back directly to the House leaders' refusal and continuing delay, time after time after time, between June 1996 and today. To say anything else is complete fantasyland for the member for Fort York.

I could apply the same to the member for Kingston and The Islands when he talks about red tape and our refusal to bring these bills forward until now. If you go back and look at House leaders' negotiations over the last year and a half, the same basic approach was taken by the House leader for the official opposition. It's on the record. I know reality hurts. I know reality doesn't want to face it.

How do we know that? You can ask several members of the Red Tape Review Commission. Not just myself, but the member for Lincoln, the member for Durham East, the member for Scarborough West and other members will tell you the same story. So don't take this silly malarkey

that in point of fact there was delay. The delay belongs to the opposition parties.

If you want to delay it because of specific concerns in the bills, I respect the remarks of the member for Dovercourt for saying so, but simply delaying for delaying tactics is the real reality of why some of these bills are now packaged the way they are, because the third party wouldn't deal with them on the merits of the case, except the one in front of us right now. That's the reality. Let's deal with it on that record.

Mr Gerretsen: Let's deal with the reality of the situation. Look at your Orders and Notices for today. It says number 260. That means there have been 260 days; not even sessional days, because some of these orders contain two sessional days, when we sit both in the afternoon and evening. In other words, it's probably closer to about 300 days since this Parliament started in September 1995. These bills were introduced in June 1996, when probably about 70 or 80 days had passed at most, which means they've had 200 days since June 1996 to call these particular red tape bills.

1750

Let's get something absolutely clear: It is the government on a day-to-day basis that decides which bills to call for debate that day, with the one exception, and that is if there is an opposition day motion, of which there probably have been about eight or nine over the last year and a half. But every other day it is the government that calls orders of the day and decides which bills are going to be discussed.

You have had over 200 days, sir, to call these particular bills. You have chosen not to do so. That is your choice. But for you then to get up and say that somehow the opposition, of which there are 45 members, is holding this government of 82 members hostage, I'll tell you the public doesn't believe it. Nobody believes you. All we want to do is follow the true democratic concept whereby the opposition can question the government on a day-to-day basis. You are denying us that every time you bring in a time allocation motion.

You have invoked closure on this House on at least 18 or 19 occasions. Today you have done the ultimate by combining about seven or eight bills in one closure motion. Shame on you.

Mrs Boyd: I want to congratulate the member for Dovercourt and the member for Fort York for being very clear about the reality of these red tape bills. They are not all minor little housekeeping issues at all. The efforts of the House leader for the government to try and use these as bargaining tools is what has kept him from calling them. Let's be very clear.

The only record that counts is the record in here. The House leader has not called these bills because the House leader has been attempting during all this period of time, although he didn't bring these bills in as an omnibus bill, to get them treated as a package to try and keep us from talking about the issues in the specific bills that we disagree with and to try and prevent any debate on those issues.

He has been trying to paint this to the members of the Red Tape Commission as a delaying tactic on our part. This is the only government in the history of Ontario that considers debate in this House to be a delaying tactic. That is exactly the way you behave again and again and again. You do not take seriously the very serious concerns that are raised.

We have shown you this week that when you have reasonable legislation, we will pass it. We will even pass it in first, second and third reading in one day if it's reasonable legislation. We are not attempting to delay. We are attempting to do our job as legislators, which is to tell you and the rest of the province about real concerns with the legislation you bring forward. That is part of the democratic process.

Our entire point about you people as a government is that you're here forming a government and you don't even believe in the principles of democracy. You keep trying to subvert democracy all the time. That's exactly what the acting House leader is attempting to do in terms of this time allocation bill. We will name it for what it is: undemocratic.

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean): With respect to the speech by my colleague, I disagree.

The Speaker: Response?

Mr Silipo: I'm glad to have a chance to just wrap up. As I said, we easily could have taken —

Mr Ruprecht: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I think there is just one more chance to have questions and answers.

The Speaker: Member for Dovercourt.

Mr Silipo: I'm happy to have the chance to wrap up on this. I think we kept our comments on this bill relatively short. Had there been more time, we would have taken a slightly longer time. But as I said earlier, we had indicated to the government that we would be agreeable to passing this particular bill without undue debate. We wanted to maintain our word on that because this is one of the few so-called red tape bills that actually is worthy of that name.

Were we to have made the decision about what to do with this bill on the more crucial concept we have seen in this House, or really the concept we haven't seen enough of in this House, the respect and lack of respect this government has for the very concept of democracy, then we would have made a different decision. We could easily have talked this bill through. But there are some things in here that we think are sensible to do. We think Bill 63, as it amends a couple of administrative changes in two or three areas, is worth supporting and we are going to support it.

As I said earlier and as my colleagues have reiterated, it is our job as members of the opposition to continue to hold this government to task. It's a traditional job of any party of the opposition and it's a job that particularly needs to be done in spades now against the kind of concentration of power this government seems intent on doing.

This is the only government that continues to rewrite the rules, to diminish debate in this House, to diminish the ability of the opposition to hold them accountable, then continues to blame us when we are able to use the rules to protect the interests of the people of the province. There is a huge majority of Tories here. They have the ability to manage the business if they choose to. They obviously have shown that they can't do it.

The Speaker: Further debate?

Ms Bassett has moved third reading of Bill 63. Is it the pleasure of the House the motion carry? Carried.

Resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

It now being nearly 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 6:30 of the clock today.

The House adjourned at 1757.

Evening sitting reported in volume B.

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No. 260B

N° 260B

ISSN 1180-2987

Legislative Assembly of Ontario

First Session, 36th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Première session, 36^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Thursday 11 December 1997

Jeudi 11 décembre 1997

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Honourable Chris Stockwell

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 11 December 1997

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 11 décembre 1997

The House met at 1830.

RED TAPE REDUCTION ACT (MINISTRY OF NORTHERN DEVELOPMENT AND MINES), 1997

LOI DE 1997 VISANT À RÉDUIRE LES FORMALITÉS ADMINISTRATIVES AU MINISTÈRE DU DÉVELOPPEMENT DU NORD ET DES MINES

Mr Spina, on behalf of Mr Hodgson, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 120, An Act to reduce red tape by amending the Mining Act / Projet de loi 120, Loi visant à réduire les formalités administratives au ministère du Développement du Nord et des Mines.

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I look forward to listening to the comments that my colleague from Brampton North has on this bill, so I don't want to prolong things, but I do want to raise a point of order with you. That has to do with the question of whether it is appropriate, as we proceed to sit here this evening, for government members to have received what I gather they have just received in the last little while, which are copies of the documentation that the Minister of Finance was supposed to release earlier today on the impact of downloading and the adjustments they have made community by community, when I as a member of the opposition have not received that same documentation. I wonder whether you could ascertain perhaps, through the government representative who is in the front of the House, whether that same respect will be accorded to those of us who sit on the opposition benches.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): If you give me a minute, I'll give you an answer.

I want to address that point. Obviously members of the government are here to hear your point and I would think they would take it under advice, but it has nothing to do with the sitting of this Legislature and the powers that I'm entitled to exercise tonight, so we will proceed.

Mr Silipo: Let me raise a point of privilege, if I may, Mr Speaker. I don't want to prolong this because we've had to address similar issues in the past, but I believe this is a question that does impact on my privileges as a member of this House in terms of my abilities to provide good representation for the people of Dovercourt if I am not being given the same kind of information that comes

out of a ministry of the government. It's public information as far as I can tell. It's not information that is secret.

Again, I believe that my privileges as a member of this House are being infringed upon if I don't have the same access to that information as members of the government do. If there is information that the Ministry of Finance is releasing on either the impact of the downloading or how that is actually going to pan out community by community, and members of the government side have been given that information, then I think it behooves the government to make that same information available to me as a member of the opposition, as a member of the New Democratic Party, and I'm sure Liberal colleagues would feel the same, because I hope that whatever we may think about what's in those sheets and that information, we all have the same right to have that information so that the constituents I represent have the same right to be represented here in this place as do the constituents of any member represented by the government side. I ask you to deal with that on a point of privilege, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes that may very well be a point of privilege. I will get a ruling on that.

I would address the member for Dovercourt. Indeed, the government is dispensing information all of the time, so that is not a breach of your privilege. We will proceed.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): On a point of privilege, Mr Speaker: I respect your ruling in that regard, but I think one must bear in mind that today on our parliamentary channel it was reported for at least a four- or a five-hour period that the Minister of Finance would be making a statement with respect to the municipal downloading situation at 3:45. The minister then came in the House, you may recall, and in answer to the member for Scarborough-Agincourt he indicated that the reason he could not give that information was that, according to news reports, he blamed old computers. The Premier actually said that they're old computers that they took over from the past government. I saw this on the 6 o'clock news tonight, and I must admit it was highly extraordinary for a Premier of this province to blame a former government for the fact that his computers broke down. It didn't make any sense to me at all. But in any event, he blamed the fact that the computers broke down at 2 am as why he could not give the municipalities the figures today and as why he could not hold the press conference he said he was going to hold at 3:45.

If that information is now available, then surely — and may I just refer you to rule 21(a), which says, "Privileges

are the rights enjoyed by the House collectively and by the members of the House individually conferred by the Legislative Assembly Act and other statutes, or by practice, precedent, usage and custom."

If there's information that the residents of Ontario and the municipalities of Ontario have been waiting for for the last six months available to certain members, and it's freely handed out to those members and they're reading from those documents right now as we sit here in this House, and it is not being made available to the members of the opposition, then with all due respect it is hard to believe that my privileges as an individual member of this House and as a collective member of this House have not been breached.

I would ask you, taking into account the new information that I've given you about the fact that the Minister of Finance blamed it on computer technology that broke down at 2 am and blamed that on the former government, that they'd taken over old computers, and taking into account the fact that he was going to have a press conference at 3:45 this afternoon, which was widely advertised to all of those here within the Queen's Park precinct, now that you've got that information, I would once again like you to revisit the idea that the privileges of us as individual members, particularly the members in the opposition who don't have that information, haven't been breached. I seek your advice on that matter.

The Acting Speaker: I have revisited it and I think that you have answered your own question, and that is that it's my duty to make sure that your privileges here in the House are not breached. Indeed, you're here and you're expressing them. I think that's proof that your privileges are indeed intact, and it's my responsibility to make sure that they are. I find that is not a point of privilege.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): Mr Speaker, I would rise on a point of privilege referring to the standing orders, section 21, under "Privilege," which reads, "(a) Privileges are the rights enjoyed by the House collectively and by the members of the House individually conferred by the Legislative Assembly Act and other statutes, or by practice, precedent, usage and custom.

"(b) Whenever a matter of privilege arises, it shall be taken into consideration immediately," you being of course the place where we would place that point of privilege.

First off, I would say to you that if indeed what has been alleged here didn't take place, all we need is for a minister of the crown to stand in his place and assure us that is not the case and this matter is over. But since that's not happening, we have to assume that indeed members of the government have been given information that affects all constituencies, not just government members' ridings. I would point to the traditions and practices of this place. I remember very clearly that when we were in government, even on matters as straightforward as briefings, if briefings were being provided to government members by members of the public service, by the bureaucracy, there was an obligation on the part of the government to provide those same briefings in the same timely fashion to

members of the opposition. That's different than briefings or meetings with your own political staff or your own caucus staff, but where the taxpayers were paying for public service work to be done, meaning the bureaucracy, then the traditions and customs and privileges bestowed upon members of this place dictated that all members, not just government members, were provided with that information.

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I would join with my colleagues in saying to you, Speaker, since it appears evident that this information that surprisingly couldn't be available a few hours ago when there would be a question period this information had to face, and now suddenly it's available, but if it's the case that they have that information, and it seems to be, make no mistake about it, our members and the people we represent are being denied rights that members of the government have given to themselves by virtue of withholding and keeping secret information which is rightfully in the proper place, that being the public domain, and that is done through members of this place.

Speaker, I would urge you, in light of the fact that the standing rules state that you must deal with this immediately — and it deals with traditions and customs, not just statutes and legislation — that you first ask a minister of the crown if indeed the question of this privilege has been breached, and if it has, then I would ask you to correct this wrong, make right our privileges and direct that the government provide the information that they must to the opposition members in order to be consistent with the standing orders.

The Acting Speaker: On the same point, the Chair recognizes the member for Don Mills.

Hon David Johnson (Minister of Education and Training): As much as I can determine it, we are to deal not with computers here tonight or what computers may have done or may not have done last night, but indeed what we're to deal with here tonight is Bill 120, which is an act to reduce red tape. Those watching on television may not be aware that this has not to do with any financial data that may or may not be available or any municipal data that may or may not be available, or whatever it is that the opposition parties are concerning themselves with; the debate this night has to do with An Act to reduce red tape by amending the Mining Act.

There is no point of privilege, Mr Speaker. If there is a session regarding certain information, in the fullness of time I'm sure everybody will have the information that may or may not be being disseminated at any one point in time. It's not possible to disseminate information to each individual member of the House at any point in time. I'm sure in the fullness of time all members will be fully aware of all of the information.

What we're dealing with here tonight is simply Bill 120, Mr Speaker. You've made your ruling and I would suggest that we carry on.

I'm just quoting here from a ruling that the Speaker, Chris Stockwell, has made. This was a ruling he made in Hansard on October 9, 1997:

"I appreciate that the member would have preferred that all members could have received the information at the same time. However, the Speaker cannot require the government to release such information — or to release it at a certain time. There is nothing in our rules or our practices that would permit a Speaker to control the dissemination of that kind of information. It is clear from any number of previous Speakers' rulings that these types of situations do not amount to a *prima facie* case of privilege."

We all know that in this House. Each and every member knows that in this House. The members who have risen on this know that, but it's an opportunity of course to have air time and make a beef and make a complaint, but it is clearly, from a previous ruling of the Speaker, not a case of privilege.

Mr Speaker, I believe you made your ruling in that regard and I would suggest we get on the debate of Bill 120 which is legitimately before this House.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): On a point of privilege, Mr Speaker: The problem that you have before you that you are being asked to deal with can be easily solved if the government has the courtesy to place on the desk of all members of the Legislature immediately the information which is being provided to members of the government, since this is surely an insult to the people in various ridings who have elected people. I think they expect that their government is going to provide this kind of information equally to all members of the House, regardless of what their political affiliation might be and not discriminate on the basis of whether someone sits in an opposition party or not.

I'm just making a suggestion that may help us out of this particular dilemma and eliminate any further points of privilege, and that is just to ask that the government place on all members' desks the same information which is being given to the government members at this time.

The Acting Speaker: I'm addressing the member for Hamilton Centre on his point of privilege, with the help of the other two members. I find that it may be a matter of courtesy, but it's not of privilege, and there is nothing that I as Speaker, under the rules you have given me to work with, can do.

The Chair recognizes the member for Brampton North.

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton North): I am pleased to say a few words about Bill 120, which is the Red Tape Reduction Act (Ministry of Northern Development and Mines). Bill 120 proposes amendments to the Mining Act to improve the business climate for Ontario's mining industry by standardizing mining claims, by clarifying definitions and by simplifying the mining fees. The legislation would also protect environmentally sensitive areas during claim staking. In doing so, it reflects our continued commitment to protect the environment.

This bill further reduces red tape, which allows for improved customer service and reduces administration costs for both the taxpayers and the mining industry. This issue came before Mr Sheehan's Red Tape Commission, and we were very pleased that we were able to institute

these changes appropriately and incorporate them as part of this bill.

The mining industry in Ontario generates a significant amount in the Ontario economy, between \$4 billion and \$7 billion of new wealth annually. Frankly, it employs about 72,000 Ontarians.

Let me address some of the elements of that bill. First, this bill amends the definition of "minerals" to include precious metals such as diamonds, and what this does is harmonize Ontario's Mining Act with the growing interest in diamond exploration in the north in general.

Second, we're eliminating the requirement to stake out and record placer mining claims. What that does is remove the expense and the confusion this particular requirement has caused in the past.

Third, we're allowing the director of mine rehabilitation to allow alternatives to prescribed methods of mine rehabilitation if, and I stress only if, the environmental standards are met or exceeded.

Fourth, the Lieutenant Governor is being authorized to prescribe especially environmentally sensitive guidelines for mineral staking. This is for the purpose of addressing specific environmental concerns in certain parts of the province, such as the Temagami area, which was a fairly contentious issue in recent times.

Finally, the Minister of Northern Development and Mines is being authorized to set the amount of mining fees to avoid the cost, the time and the effort of developing new regulations each time the fees are changed.

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One of the arguments that the opposition brought forward on second reading: The member for Windsor-Sandwich said that this was to be a new cost to business, contrary to what this government is attempting to do. It's simply not the fact. It was clear that the member, by the very fact that she had to be brought back to the issue by yourself, Speaker, in that debate — what we are doing is simplifying the government approval process, as she indicated.

The only difference is that we are changing the words "prescribed fee" to "required fee." It's a small change in the act which allows the costs of actually doing the processing of mining documentation to be recouped. This has been consulted about in the industry and found to be quite acceptable.

Mr Bradley: It's a new tax.

Mr Spina: It is not a new tax. You see, we have the endorsement of the Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada, and I shall read from the letter. This was dated December 4 of this year, to Minister Hodgson, and it says, "In order that clarity and certainty can be created, we ask that Bill 120 now take priority so that it can move forward to royal assent."

Through the consultative process of the minister's Mining Act advisory committee, the Prospectors and Developers Association has been involved with the review of Bill 120.

"The explorationists active in the Temagami area need your support so that special regulations can be finalized

which will allow environmentally responsible exploration work to be undertaken in this sensitive area.

"We would also urge the quick passage of Bill 68, which has been stalled at second reading. This bill is less critical since it affects mainly government activities....

"In general, we support actions which will simplify government and, at the same time, improve efficiency for the mining industry."

The second letter that Minister Hodgson received was from Wayne Adair, the reeve of the corporation of the township of Temagami. I paraphrase; we don't need to get to the friendly items such as their sadness at seeing Minister Hodgson go from natural resources to management board; however, they're happy that he has retained the portfolio of Minister of Northern Development and Mines. Mr Adair stated:

"I am very concerned that Bill 120 seems to be stalled. It's a very important piece of legislation that has direct implications not only for Temagami but for most of northern Ontario. I am speaking primarily about the sections of Bill 120 dealing with amendments to the Mining Act that will provide the mechanism to allow for staking in sensitive areas.

"Some of the richest mineralization sites here are currently under a staking prohibition order. Our area only needs the legislative okay to amend the Mining Act. I know you are familiar with our land use dilemma over the years in the Temagami region. It was under your watch that the lifting of the cautions in most of Temagami occurred, thus sparking a significant staking rush. The final steps in the process are the enacting of Bill 120, the creation of special regulations for exploration in sensitive areas, and the formal adoption of the Temagami comprehensive land use plan.

"Bill 120 not only promotes extra protective measures for exploration in the Temagami region, but it also gives the Lands for Life round table the necessary flexibility for making recommendations on staking in sensitive areas throughout Ontario. Without this ability, the round table will be pressured to leave sensitive lands out of the land base altogether" — perhaps even to go to waste.

"If the same percentage of land base is taken out of northern Ontario that has been taken out of the Temagami region it will mean the decimation of the resource industry as we know it....

"For the Lands for Life process, for northern Ontario, for the Temagami region, the timely passage of this legislation is essential.

"Thank you for your consideration...."

Let me address two other final issues with respect to this bill and with respect to comments made by the opposition members. First, there was a concern on the part of the critic from the third party, who is in fact the former minister. She had a concern about an element of the bill regarding the protection of some of the areas. We are pleased that since then the member for Sudbury East has spoken to members of the ministry and appears to be satisfied that this is acceptable. In fact, we understand that this bill will be endorsed by the opposition parties.

There was one other element, and it happened to be the timeliness element that the opposition members brought up. Yes, this bill was introduced in first reading — how long ago?

Mr Gerretsen: A year and a half ago.

Mr Spina: No, it wasn't a year and a half ago. It was last February, which you so clearly pointed out.

Interjection.

Mr Spina: February 1997. Yes, we understand that.

Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East): February 7.

Mr Spina: February 7. Thank you, member for Sudbury East. She gave me the exact date.

The interesting thing is that this is the kind of legislation that Liberals attempted to bring in under former Minister Kerrio. The last party attempted to bring it in. But neither time was it able to be successfully brought through to completion. This government is delivering. Perhaps the delay was undue, but I'm happy that we have finally had the opportunity to get this item on the table and I'm pleased to have the satisfaction or at least the concurrence of the opposition members, in particular the former minister, and I look forward to her comments. I think that gives credit to the context of the bill, the thrust of the bill and the objectives we are all trying to achieve.

The Acting Speaker: Comments and questions?

Mr Bradley: My concerns are not alleviated by the member for Brampton North and his comments, because I have watched many of this crew in action for too long and know that one can only trust when one is observant on an ongoing basis of what the government is doing. The member mentions fees. I've been counting up the number of fees this government has imposed, and since Mike Harris said that a user fee is in fact a tax, I am now up to 197 new tax increases implemented by the Mike Harris government. In this particular case I see them again. I probably have not been able to keep up with all of the tax increases this government has implemented which are somehow disguised as fee increases.

Interjections.

Mr Bradley: I hear interjections from people who appear to be contradicting our Premier, and I'm telling you, our Premier said over and over again, even during his leadership campaign, but subsequent to that — when people said, "What about a user fee, Mike Harris, leader of the Conservative Party?" he said, "A user fee is a tax, make no mistake about it." I see new user fees in this particular piece of legislation, so now I can count more and more taxes.

If I can find, just on a cursory look at the legislation and the program of the government, 194 tax increases, you can imagine how many there are if we wanted to put a legislative intern on the job, for instance, going through all the ministries, counting the tax increases that Mike Harris and his crew have implemented through the back door in this province.

I wish my fears could be alleviated by the comments of the parliamentary assistant, and that's easy to say, because most people are parliamentary assistants on the

other side, but by this particular parliamentary assistant —

Mr Spina: Not as many as you had, Jimmy.
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Mr Bradley: Well, they have committee chairs and people like that as well. But I really feel that the people of this province should be more vigilant and not simply accept the assurances of the member for Brampton North.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): This is yet another example of a bill the government is presenting that this caucus and the opposition is supporting, contrary to noises we heard earlier today. The government was trying to blame the opposition for its own incompetence in terms of getting legislation through that they want to get through. Here again is another example. I find this bill really interesting. We do support it. It's interesting that, to my knowledge, it's doing something that is actually going to protect the environment, is going to enhance environmental protection within the Temagami region.

Ms Martel: Allegedly.

Ms Churley: Allegedly. We'll see. This, today, on the same day, and may I congratulate the Sierra Legal Defence Fund here, when a court charged MNR with breaking the Ministry of the Environment's own laws. They were charged and convicted and fined for opening a very sensitive environmental access road in the Temagami region. It's interesting that both the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Ministry of the Environment came hand in hand with a plea bargain saying, "Okay, but please don't punish us."

I'm happy to say the judge denied that plea bargain and they were fined just like anybody else who breaks the law is fined. This must be a wake-up call for the government, that they can't continue to break the law and must start protecting the environment instead of doing everything they can to destroy it.

We're happy to support this bill today. We'll see what happens. My colleague from Sudbury East will be speaking in more detail in a few minutes about our reaction to it, but shame on the government. This is the first time in the history of our government that one ministry is —

The Acting Speaker: The member's time has expired. Comments and questions?

Mr Gerretsen: As I indicated last week, one of the concerns this bill doesn't deal with is the number of MNR employees who have in effect been let go by this ministry.

Ministry offices, particularly in the rural parts of this province, that had many MNR employees working for them are decimated. No wonder we have to pass this kind of legislation, because there simply aren't enough officers around any more to deal with the rules and regulations we have within this ministry.

What's very interesting is what the government did this afternoon, and I want to come back to that for just a moment because it deals with red tape bills. This is a red tape bill. The government this afternoon filed a time allocation motion, closure. The people of Ontario should understand that this is closure. They basically don't want the opposition to speak about these bills any more, bills

that have been here since June 1996, for a year and a half. We have waited to debate these bills. We've held over 200 sessions, or maybe 300 sessions, since then and we haven't debated them. Now the government feels it has to pass them all in one fell swoop by putting six or seven bills in one time allocation motion.

At one time closure was something the people of Ontario didn't want to have happen in their Parliament. It's starting to creep into our system more and more. This government so far has done it 19 times and they've done it on all the important bills, all the bills about which there was much controversy. Now they're even doing it on bills about which there isn't all that much controversy by lumping them all together. I say shame on them. You are undemocratic and it's —

The Acting Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Ms Martel: I want to comment on the comments that were made by the member for Brampton North. As I came in I heard him saying that the last time we had discussed this there had been some concerns or some comments raised about the timing of this bill.

It was me who raised some comments about the timing of the bill because in the debate on second reading the member made much to-do about how many people were writing in and calling and faxing and saying this bill had to be done as soon as possible. I pointed out to him that in fact the government had introduced this legislation on February 3 and the first time the government decided it was important we should deal with it was late at the end of that last week. It all of a sudden became a priority. It all of a sudden became essential that we deal with this. For the last 10 months this hasn't been a priority with this government at all. It hasn't been at the top of the list. It hasn't been something it has been important to do. All of a sudden, about 10 months after the bill had been introduced, it became a priority.

I want to quote a little bit from the letter my colleague the member for Brampton North read into the record. This is from the reeve of Temagami to the minister and there's a paragraph he didn't read which says, "I know that you explained to Mr Smith" — Mr Smith is a councillor as well from the region — "that the legislative agenda is full and that this bill and its accompanying regulations are in the heap, but I am appealing to you: Insist that this legislation be put back on the agenda."

Wow. Excuse me., but what was in the heap was the government's workers' compensation legislation and its rent control, the government's download bill, the government's workfare bill, all kinds of stuff that attacks people in this province was more important than this piece of legislation. So no doubt this was in the heap. It just suddenly, miraculously appeared because there is no doubt the minister has been getting a lot of pressure, but it's his fault that this hasn't been called before.

The Acting Speaker: I recognize the member for Brampton North; he has two minutes to respond.

Mr Spina: I appreciate the comments. The only ones I want to rebut are these: first, the comments made by the Liberal Party talking about tax increases in user fees. In

fact we had a mini-debate here with some of the members of the third party whom we in the rump are privileged to sit beside because it allows for witty repartee on occasion.

What I want to say is there's a big difference between a tax increase and a user fee that the Liberals don't understand. A tax increase is something that everybody has to share in paying, which is a socialist concept, as opposed to a user fee, which is that those who use the service pay for the fee. So there's a big difference there, to my members from the official opposition.

The member for Hamilton Centre talked to me about living in a glass house. I refer to the glass house the Liberals are living in. The member indicated we have more PAs than he's ever seen, that everybody's a parliamentary assistant. The reality is they had the largest cabinet in the history of this province.

Interjections.

Mr Spina: Not the NDP, the Liberals. The Liberals had the largest cabinet in the history of this province and the largest number of parliamentary assistants in the history of this province. Talk about a bloated government. They live in the biggest glass house we could ever have asked for.

But to get back to the member for Sudbury East, we finally took it off the heap and put it on the table.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Bradley: The last comments I heard previous to being able to address this bill in detail, because it is a detailed piece of legislation, sound very much like a person we all know — I saw him on television last night — the leader of the Conservative Party, Brian Mulroney. That last comment reminded me of Brian Mulroney because of the exaggeration and hyperbole that was contained within that statement. You know, the longer I see this government in power, the more I see the stamp of Brian Mulroney on this particular government.

Some of the people here in this House have worried about the length of time that my friend Frank Sheehan, the member for Lincoln, has had getting this bill before the House. I can remember House leaders' meeting after House leaders' meeting over the past long period of time. I have implored the government to bring forward the red tape bills so we could debate them. Not that I agreed with every clause in all the bills, but I have said that if these bills are so important as you say they are and as my friend Frank tells me when he sees me in the hallway, and he's eager and he's wanting to move these forward, then why haven't we seen them on the order paper? Why have we not seen them brought forward by the government? It's quite obvious: because the government didn't consider them to be of great importance. Now all of a sudden as we get into the dying days of a session, the government wants to trot out its so-called red tape bills. I think the member for Lincoln should be insulted that his colleagues in the government would not have brought forward bills in which he has invested considerable time earlier on in this session or even the last session.

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There was a period of time that could have been allocated for that. But Guy Giorno, who runs the government from the back rooms, decided that he wanted to see rule changes in this House. You see, the House was working too democratically to suit the backroom boys and the government, the people who are impatient with the democratic process, the people who feel the opposition is just some irritant to be shoved out of the way, the people who believe that if there's any opposition out there, they must be misguided or misled people. They wanted to see the rule changes brought through the House instead of dealing with legislation.

In the dying days of the spring session, which started last January, by the way, and ended in June some time, I can well recall those of us in opposition saying, "Bring forward your legislation." But no, the government House leader of the day, Mr Johnson, was instructed by Guy Giorno and those who have the real control in this government to deal with changing the rules of the Legislature to grease the skids for the government to get its legislation through. So we saw what can only be referred to as draconian and drastic changes to the procedural rules of this House, rules which, as the member for Scarborough-Ellesmere says, restrict the debate in the Legislature — I saw her making a signal that said "restrict the debate in this House" — on various pieces of legislation.

Even though by having debate, people who watch the television channel, for instance, are able to appreciate and understand the intricacies and ramifications of the legislation, this government, at least the inner cabinet and the unelected people, want to secretly shove things through or put them in the House in as short a period of time as possible and not have the public be as widely aware of the issues and the legislation that is coming forward. As a result, the government hasn't included this particular bill, but similar red tape bills have now appeared in the time allocation motion which in its particular form is unprecedented in the House.

I mentioned earlier today in the two-minute intervention that is permitted that I hope those editors out there who keep telling their reporters here at Queen's Park that they shouldn't cover rule changes, that they're not important, that they're an inside story rather than outside story, that they don't have implications, will think again about that and start to cover them. I know there are going to be people in certain newspapers in this country, particularly those controlled by Conrad Black, who are going to think that the rule changes are great or that a time allocation motion is justified, because that's their way of doing things. They simply push things through; they don't really care about the democratic process.

So they'll have their YPC phone up one of the columnists or one of the editors and say: "You know what the opposition wants. They simply want to stretch out the amount of time and delay important government legislation." Those people who have come from the ranks of the Reform Party and come from Mike Harris's office, as some of them have, will dutifully write their editorials and

say: "John Baird is right. It is absolutely essential. The opposition's irresponsible."

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean): That was a good column.

Mr Bradley: I wish they would get more progressive and objective people to write the columns, not people who were once working for the Conservative Party or the Reform Party or the Fraser Institute. But when Conrad Black used his millions upon millions of dollars to purchase, what is it now, 58 out of 104 newspapers in Canada, the constituent of Mr Turnbull — he claims him. I don't know whether he makes donations or not. You should go to him for a donation, because he has lots of money.

Mr Douglas B. Ford (Etobicoke-Humber): He owes lots too.

Mr Bradley: He owes lots as well, the member for Etobicoke-Humber tells me, but he now controls 58 of 104 newspapers in this country. When I look at those who aspire to compete with national newspapers, those in our national capital who hire the people who are all the 20-something whiz kids and early-30-something whiz kids who are now writing the editorials, and one of them I remember has worked — the member for Nepean will help me on names. Who worked in the Premier's office for the Conservative caucus? Was that Mr Gardner? I think it was Mr Gardner. There was another who worked for the Reform Party. I read their résumés as they came in.

So when I say that this kind of bill is important, it certainly is, but I want the people out there to be informed by watching this legislative channel, not having to rely on Mike Harris's ex-researchers and Preston Manning's ex-researchers to provide the gospel for the people of Ottawa and surrounding area. I think it will be important for those editors out there who care about the democratic system to absolutely ensure that there is adequate debate on all of the red tape bills, including this one, but particularly those that they are trying to package into one time allocation, one closure motion which will choke off any further debate of significance on bills that have some significance.

My colleagues in the opposition have mentioned from time to time that what is disguised as a simple, straightforward, easy-to-support bill which cuts red tape often has implications which are detrimental to the province. The last one we passed this afternoon, Bill 63, I thought was reasonable. I'm told by others who are familiar with the mining scene that this bill, though not totally benign, is not one which presents a great threat to our province. But I do become concerned when I see in the bill the following: "The Lieutenant Governor in Council is authorized to make regulations that are particular in application and may be limited as to time or place or both and that apply in areas designated by the Minister of Northern Development and Mines."

There's a reason for that. Regulations go only through —

Mr Baird: What is in that glass?

Mr Bradley: I assure the members of the Legislature that is water and ice.

I want to tell them that regulations are dangerous, because members of this House don't get a chance to debate regulations. So when you hear a government say that they are going to leave to the regulatory power of cabinet so many aspects of policy, one has to be concerned. If it's spelled out in the legislation, if it's right here in the bill, whether one agrees or not with it, at least we know what we're debating. Everything's on the table. But when you do it by regulation — and here comes more water. I'm pleased with this. They must know this speech may not be over in the next five minutes.

Hon Charles Harnick (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): We keep sending you water so the speech will be over in five minutes.

Mr Bradley: The Attorney General intervenes over there. One of his members has broken the front part of his desk for some reason; I can't figure out what that is.

But I want to say to him, because I know he would be concerned, having run against tax increases, that within this legislation there are user fees. I don't know whether he supported Dianne Cunningham or Mike Harris in the leadership race. I suspect it must have been Mike Harris because he's sitting in the cabinet as Attorney General. But I want to say to him and to all members of the House and recall to him that Mike Harris said — and the member for Brampton North didn't seem to remember this — that whenever you implement a user fee or increase a user fee, that's a new tax. I believed Mike Harris back in those days. That was the Mike Harris who said he didn't want any money from gambling operations in Ontario. I believed him when he said that. I thought, well, I don't agree with everything that Mike Harris says by any means, but there are one or two things he's said that I agree with. One was that a user fee is a tax.

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This is now the 198th. I count 197 tax increases already. This is now the 198th tax increase this government has implemented, and this from the Taxfighter. That's because you have to count —

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough-Ellesmere): Nice try, Jim.

Mr Bradley: I tell the member for Scarborough-Ellesmere, you have to count the user fees. You have to count those as taxes. Listen, I wouldn't have counted them if Mike Harris didn't say, "A user fee is a tax," but he said it. He said that when he was competing for the leadership race with Dianne Cunningham. He said, well, we might have some user fees but, you know, a user fee is a tax; we have to count it as a tax. And now I see in all of this legislation all kinds of new user fees.

Of course the other thing we know about user fees is that they don't take into account a person's ability to pay. A person who has a lot of wealth has a much easier time paying the user fee than a person who doesn't. That's a simple statement of fact.

Mr Ford: Assumption.

Mr Bradley: I think it's fair to say that. I don't think there's anything unfair about that, that a user fee does not take into account a person's ability to pay. For a person

who is extremely wealthy as compared to a person of modest means, the person of modest means is going to have a much more difficult time paying the fee. That's why in some cases — not all cases by any means — it is better to obtain the funding for a program from the general population, particularly where the general population indirectly may benefit, than it is from the individual. There are other cases, and I'm certainly fair enough to say that may be the case in some cases.

But I've now counted my 198th tax increase by Mike Harris. I hope that Randall Denly and I hope that Mr Gardner and others of the new crew who are writing the editorials and columns in the *Ottawa Citizen*, the 20-somethings and 30-somethings who have all the answers because they've worked for the Fraser Institute and for Mike Harris or for the member for the Reform Party — these are people who have to know these things. They have to know what we think.

Mr Garry J. Guzzo (Ottawa-Rideau): He studied in Trudeau's office.

Mr Bradley: I heard Mulroney's name mentioned on the other side. Now the member for Ottawa-Rideau has mentioned — was it Brian Mulroney? I think it was Brian Mulroney that you had mentioned. Anyway, I digress into the federal field, where I know my colleagues over there like to venture. They like to venture there because whenever there is credit to be accumulated, large as life in the front row are Mike Harris and his colleagues. Large as life they come in for the credit. But when there's responsibility or when there's criticism, they hightail it somewhere else and point the finger in a direction slightly northeasterly of here to Ottawa.

I really wonder why some of them didn't run for the federal Parliament, because they spend more time talking about federal issues in this House than provincial, though heaven knows that's understandable. I want to say that's understandable, because if I were facing the wrath of the electorate the way the Conservative members are now, I think I would want to talk about some other level of government as well.

I hope, as I know you do, Mr Speaker, because you and I may be a bit suspicious of some of the computers that we have available to us, there isn't a computer glitch that affects this particular piece of legislation. This afternoon, while there was time to comment in this House, we were scheduled to receive from the Minister of Finance the downloading information; in other words, what would be the additional costs for the new onerous responsibilities being forced on municipalities by the Mike Harris government. "What would be those new costs?" we were asking. The Minister of Finance said they had a glitch in the computer; they couldn't produce these.

As I said this afternoon — the member for St Catharines-Brock will want to know this because he plays hockey sometimes with the member for Oakville South, Gary Carr. I dispelled the myth, particularly for Gary Carr's mother, Joyce Carr, living in Rexdale, that somehow he had introduced a virus into the computers because he was so concerned about the implications for his riding.

I know there's a competition between Mr Young, the member for Halton Centre, and Mr Carr, the member for Oakville South, for the seat eventually. I don't know where this rumour started, but I want to assure my other friends from Halton that in fact Gary Carr was not responsible for infecting the computers with a virus so that they couldn't produce the downloading figures for various parts of the province.

By the way, Mr Speaker, I wanted to commend you. I'm just going to diverge a bit and I know you will let me. I want to commend you because you are contributing to some fund-raising for a hospital in your riding where you get part of the 12 days of Christmas that says, I think, 12 drummers drumming. A reporter told me that today and I told him I was commending you on being part of a fund-raising effort. Apparently this is a fund-raising effort that you're involved in. I think you deserve credit for that. I like to see members involved in that. A round of applause is probably due for our Speaker for being involved, and I'll lead that applause right now.

Applause.

Mr Bradley: I'm not quite sure where that fits in this bill. I'm not quite certain where that fits in this particular piece of legislation, but I think it's worth noting because our Speaker has an onerous task being in that chair for hours at a time and trying to decipher sometimes the debate that goes on. I know there are other members who sometimes diverge from the exact contents of a bill, and we want to ensure that we're all on topic.

We look at the mine closings. This bill, as my friend the parliamentary assistant will tell us, talks about what happens when a mine closes down and how it's looked after. If it is not done properly, the closing of a mine when it is no longer financially viable can have very significant environmental damage. What I worry about when I hear "deregulation," and my colleagues have tried to assure me this isn't a problem — I've been given a signal now by the NDP that I should move on so that Mr Colle can speak.

When I am talking about mine closings, I'm worried, as my colleague from Riverdale would be, that in fact there could be a problem for the environment. The mine tailings themselves, she would know, present a real challenge. Can it be overcome? There are many people who try to say it can't be, and they may or may not be right, but it costs millions upon millions of dollars — hundreds of millions of dollars in this case — for this purpose.

Thank you very much. The chief government whip has now provided for those of us in opposition the facts and figures as to what will happen with the government downloading. But I think what he has to know and what we all have to know is this — this is only in Niagara. What we have to know in these figures that have now been introduced in the Legislature is the following: This is only the first year. You see, when local councils, including those affected by this bill, look at the figures, they should know that the figures are skewed or changed by transition funds; in other words, one- or two-shot deals.

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The Tories on council, who have been beside themselves because there have been people criticizing them, have had to embarrassingly say: "Yes, the Harris government is going to hurt our municipality. We're going to have to either cut municipal services further than we already have or we have to raise user fees or we have to raise municipal property taxes." They will get these figures and people will say, "Oh, look, Mike Harris is going to save us from all of this," if I anticipate what I'm going to see when I have a chance to look at this. But what they should know is that this is simply to tide the provincial government over to the provincial election.

What the municipal councillors should do, even those Tories who want to love Mike Harris and want to support Mike Harris, is ensure that they look at the third- and fourth- and fifth-year and beyond implications of the downloading of responsibility to municipalities.

Mr Guzzo: That was the Peterson system.

Mr Bradley: The slush fund is there now. I must tell my friend from Ottawa-Rideau who speaks, because I know he'll be concerned. The member for Rideau cannot be bought off or have his concerns alleviated by a slush fund which is thrown out to carry the government to the election.

Mr Guzzo: Especially when Ottawa-Carleton gets none.

Mr Bradley: He says Ottawa-Carleton will get none. I'm sympathetic. He will want to know then and he will be imploring the members of the cabinet to tell him what the long-term implications are once the slush fund has dried up, once Mike Harris has got himself to the election date. He'll want to know what the long-term implications are.

I know municipal councillors in Niagara, regardless of what these figures say, are going to say, "We're relieved that you didn't kick us in the face this time by giving us great problems, but what is coming when this information is no longer applicable, when the fund has dried up, when the Mulroney-type fund has dried up?"

I shouldn't mention Brian Mulroney's name. I've actually met him on one occasion; a very cordial, friendly person, no doubt. I may not have agreed with everything he did but he was pleasant in the one opportunity I had to meet with him.

This bill deals as well with Temagami and the Temagami area. I have a view which may be different from many people in the House on the preservation of Temagami. I think Temagami is an absolute gem. It reminds me a bit of the Niagara Escarpment and I see the Niagara Escarpment now under assault by people who would like to see development take place on it.

The Niagara Escarpment is a beautiful, natural area that many people enjoy in its present state. There have been over the years some pieces of development there. There was an appointment made to the Niagara Escarpment Commission. I guess the person had to resign over something that had nothing directly to do with the responsibilities as a commissioner, but rather a personal remark, an unfortunate remark the person made and

terminology that he used. But in the first place, the member for Sudbury East and I warned that here was an individual who was opposed to preserving the escarpment.

I worry and I hope that the parliamentary assistant can persuade me that we're not going to see happen in Temagami what we're seeing in some parts of the Niagara Escarpment as development is allowed to take place. Temagami is a real gem. Ask people from around the world. I'm not an outdoors person the way some people are. I must say that. I still enjoy the outdoors but there are some people who love to travel in the wilderness, love to in a very basic way go through the wilderness and so on. "What a beautiful area," they will tell you. They go canoeing in there, they don't use motorboats or anything of this nature in that specific area, like Lady Evelyn park, for instance. But what a wonderful area Ontario has there.

There are some people, and I know this is why some of the rules are put in, who want to, holus-bolus, get in there and cut the wood and mine the area. We try to do that, in our province, carefully and should try to do it carefully.

I have a view that may be different from even some of my colleagues — I'm sure there are different views in other parties as well — on how Temagami might be treated. I know there are some Conservatives who are very concerned when they hear of further development taking place in such a pristine area, how it will affect it. When you've taken the last ounce of nickel or cut down the last tree, what is left? Sometimes that beautiful wilderness serves us well and can also be financially viable and profitable for us and that's good, because there's nothing wrong with profit, for those people who think there is. There's nothing wrong with profit. I think there can be a profit made from that beautiful land by having eco-tourists, for instance, who use that specific area.

I just hope that we're not going to see the saws come out in great numbers to saw down those lovely forests, particularly the clear-cutting of them. I hope we're not going to see unrestricted mining taking place in areas which are best left in a pristine state. I'm sure — I'm assured, at least — that the bill is going to prevent that from happening. The Minister of the Environment, in this case Mr Sterling, his responsibility economically is to protect the long-term economic interests of the province.

They used to say the Minister of the Environment has to fight with the finance minister or the economic development minister because one has one responsibility, the other has another. Often the Minister of Finance, the Minister of Economic Development, no matter who they are, no matter what government, have a role to play because they want to see the economic development take place as quickly as possible and be as profitable for the province as possible, and that's their job and that's understandable. But the Minister of the Environment has a different role and that is, as I say, to protect the long-term economic interest. There has to be that balance out there. That's why a round table often — getting people together, not confronting, but getting people together to talk about how we can preserve the pristine areas of our province for centuries to come and still have some other kinds of

economic development take place that could be of benefit to all of us.

I worry personally — some of my colleagues may not — when I see the cautions being lifted in the Temagami area so that mining and lumbering can take place to a greater extent than is the case today. Others may not share that concern. It's a personal concern that I happen to have.

The bill also has some implications because, as some people have mentioned, I'm concerned about the number of people available in the Ministry of Natural Resources to carry out the responsibilities. More and more in these red tape bills we're seeing — it's probably too extreme to say this but I can't think of another terminology. Too often I'm seeing the fox put in charge of the hen-house. I think people who have a detached viewpoint can regulate, where there has to be regulation, in a fairer fashion than those who have a vested interest.

I think governments should proceed with caution when they turn over to people the responsibility for self-regulation. This isn't to say that it cannot be done, because in some instances I think there has been success enjoyed in that field and I'm pleased when that happens. But so often I believe it's better to have somebody who is detached making that judgement; knowledgeable, yes, but detached from the day-to-day operations. I become concerned when I see that not happening and when I see the number of Ministry of Natural Resources and Ministry of Northern Development employees being reduced very drastically and, as a result, the laws we have not being enforced as they should.

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Make no mistake about it, one must examine one by one the so-called red tape bills to see what the implications are. One can't always assume, for instance, that regulations are bad in every case. There are some cases where they're outdated. That's why I'm pleased when any government looks at all of its regulations. That should be routine for any new government. This government, as previous government have done, looked at the regulations. It should be routine to see if they are up to date, to see if they're still applicable, to see if they make sense under present circumstances, and then if not, to modify them or remove them, and if there's a need for further regulation, to implement those further regulations.

But one must look at them bill by bill, because often, for instance in the field of the environment, regulations were put in there to protect the environment, and often, unfortunately in reaction to problems that arose as opposed to in a so-called proactive way implementing those policies.

I want to share with my colleague the member for Oakwood, because he is very concerned about red tape bills and about this specific piece of legislation, the opportunity to comment on this piece of legislation. But as I reach the crescendo or the conclusion of my remarks this evening, let us all remember that not all of the red tape bills are benign. The one this afternoon I thought was. I'm assured by colleagues on all sides of the House, though I still have my worries, that this bill is relatively benign.

I commend the removal of regulations that have no use any longer or that are unnecessarily preventing desirable results in the province and not protecting anything else. I don't, holus-bolus, want to protect the regulatory regime, but I think there is a place for regulation to protect one.

My friend Tom Froese is here. He is a member of the farming community. His family has been involved. He would know that there are regulations that affect the farming community. This isn't a desire of governments to be mean to farmers, but often farmers themselves will come to government and say, "If we are to have a viable future, we must have from the government a level playing field." That may require some regulation. On the other hand, farmers may come forward and say that sometimes the regulatory regime is detrimental.

All I'm saying is that we must do this one by one, which is why I know the government House leader will be wise enough on Monday not to proceed with the time allocation motion that puts six bills into one bill simply to rush them through the House.

Now I'm going to turn over to the distinguished member for Oakwood, who has a very great concern about Bill 120 and its implications and has some interesting comments, the opportunity to continue these remarks.

Mr Mike Colle (Oakwood): As always, I want to try to follow up the member for St Catharines, who certainly speaks from the heart. I know he's extremely concerned about what is happening to our mining sector and also very concerned about what is happening to our heritage trees, our forests in Temagami, and he's also very concerned about the farming community. I think he has the makings of a great parliamentarian and he's proven that over the last 20 years. He's going to continue to represent the voice of people in Ontario who are concerned about this Legislature and the bills it passes, the bills it debates.

Bill 120 is typical of a lot of bills that come before this House in that it seems to have one trademark phrase. The phrase that dominates Bill 120, although it is about mining, is the way this bill changes existing laws, and the powers it hands over to the cabinet and the Premier is most interesting. In the bill itself it says, "The Lieutenant Governor in Council may prescribe the circumstances where a proponent need not comply with a provision in a regulation..." This is typical of a lot of the bills that are being passed daily in this House.

If you look at Bill 160, which the public is probably more familiar with, it is a typical pattern that the governing decisions of this Legislature and the governing decisions which affect the people of Ontario be made behind closed doors. That is the pattern that is most frightening about Bill 120 and about most of the bills that are coming forward. You'll see that regulatory powers are increased and more and more decisions are made by the cabinet, by the Premier. This means they're not up for debate. It means they can't be questioned. So these changes this bill will allow in the mining sector are not only in this very brief bill but they give more regulatory power to the cabinet. They give more decision-making power over mines.

In this bill, as I've said, it talks about giving certain proponents the right not to comply with existing legislation or rules or regulations that deal with mining. The public will never know or will never be able to question the government or the minister on how these changes were made because this bill gives them the power to do so without scrutiny.

The next paragraph says, again, "The Lieutenant Governor in Council is authorized to make regulations that are particular in application, may be limited as to the time or place or both, and that apply in areas designated by the Minister of Northern Development and Mines." Again, it's done behind closed doors with no public scrutiny.

I know that Her Excellency the Lieutenant Governor, Hilary Weston, was very upset the other day. She couldn't believe the number of faxes and letters and phone calls she received from people across Ontario. She was astounded that she got tens of thousands of requests from citizens in Ontario who are worried about education asking her to intervene. She said: "Oh, I can't intervene. Where did this idea come from?" Well, you can see why many Ontarians are starting to ask for her intervention, because in every bill you see more and more references to the Lieutenant Governor in Council, as in this bill. So no doubt people are beginning to think that perhaps the Lieutenant Governor has some real power to overturn a bill or a decision.

As we know, the Lieutenant Governor's role is basically ceremonial and it's the cabinet and the Premier and the backroom bureaucrats who make the decisions. She can't actually do anything to overturn a bill, but you can imagine why so many Ontarians are starting to plead for help, because they don't know whom to turn to. They go to their ordinary MPPs and they say: "Listen, what is in this Bill 120 or in these other bills? Can you stop them? Can I stop them?" Many people are losing hope. They are saying, "The bills are passing so fast and furiously, when do we get a chance to find out what's in them?" That is why as a last resort they are now even faxing, phoning and writing the Lieutenant Governor, asking for her intervention, because people don't know where to turn to slow this government down so they can have a say in their education system, in the Mining Act. The tragedy is, again, that people in this province are having less and less say in the legislation that this government is ramming through day after day.

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As you know, along with Bill 120, which is one of these red tape bills, come Monday the government is going to try and put forward —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): A point of order; the leader of the third party.

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): I understand that some members of the Legislature have been handed information, brochures on how their communities are going to be affected in terms of downloading. Others have not been given that information.

The Speaker: We already went through that, actually. There was a point of order already raised, I believe.

Mr Hampton: This is a point of privilege, Speaker.

The Speaker: Okay, a point of privilege; sorry.

Mr Hampton: I think it is a point of privilege that some members have this information and other members do not have this information. Is this any way for a government to operate?

The Speaker: We went through this earlier, and I think the same rules apply. It was classified as a courtesy but certainly not a point of privilege. But I appreciate the point you have made and I have taken it into consideration. Whether you agree or don't agree that the government should operate in that fashion, it's not a point of privilege that I can force or tell a government whom to give information to and whom not to.

Mr Hampton: On a point of order this time, Speaker: This has incredible impacts upon citizens across this province, upon taxpayers across this province, and it cannot be the case that some members are privileged to receive this information and others are not. What a hell of a way to run a government.

The Speaker: You're entering the realm of debate rather than a point of order.

Member for Oakwood?

Mr Colle: If I can continue — by the way, the member for St Catharines has the secret brown envelope from the minister on the downloading. I don't have the secret brown envelope. I certainly agree with my colleague from Rainy River, that hopefully we would all get the same information.

The member for St Catharines has it, the Tory caucus all have their downloading figures, the member from Kingston. Somehow the member for Oakwood doesn't get the same kind of treatment. I think it's pretty shabby, and they can't blame that on the computer.

This government always likes to pass the blame. You know, the blame stops at the Premier's desk, because as in Bill 120, more and more power and regulation of mining and so forth is going to him. That's what this bill basically does. It supposedly reduces red tape, but it gives more power to the Premier behind closed doors.

As a member of the Legislature, I can't get information to find out what's in these bills. I can't even get information on the downloading figures. Some members have it, some don't, and this is the kind of government we're establishing. It's a government of privilege. It's a government that decides on their own whim who will get what rather than doing it in an even fashion. So here I stand today, no brown envelope with the figures; other members have brown envelopes. I guess it gets back to these bills.

A lot of these red tape bills were introduced back on June 5, 1996, and the government has the audacity to say that it's our fault, that we're slowing the process down. They've been sitting on these bills, Bill 63, 65, 66, 67 — the six-pack. On Monday they are going to bring in the omnibus six-pack closure bill. They're going to close off debate on six bills at a time. As if it's not enough to close on one at a time, now they've got to do it six at a time. Then they wonder why people are getting so upset in this

province. They wonder why the member for St Catharines is fit to be tied as the House leader.

They're going to be introducing six bills like Bill 120 into the Legislature on Monday and closing debate on all six and saying the public has no right to know what's in the bills. That's what they do. When they deny us the right to know what's in Bill 120, they deny the public the right to know what's in Bill 120. That's what they're doing. On Monday it's going to be the closure bill of all closure bills, the mother of closure bills, the six-for-one closure on Monday.

If the member for St Catharines blows a gasket, you know full well that he's entitled to blow a gasket because this government is laughing in the face of the people of Ontario. They may not want to know all the details about Bill 120 and what's in the Mining Act, but they want to have the assurance that at least the member for St Catharines, the member for Dovercourt, the member for Riverdale or the member for Kingston and The Islands are able to question what's in the bill. That's all the public asks.

This government is saying: "You don't have to know what's in the bill. We're going to pass them six at a time come Monday." Six bills at a time, that's what we're getting to: no debate, no questions, passing bills six at a time. If that isn't an affront to democracy, I don't know what is, again along with more government by regulation.

In Bill 120, we see the minister is authorized to set the amount of fees required to be paid. The minister is setting up all kinds of user fees without any public scrutiny. How much are these user fees? Are they right? Are they legitimate? This government is saying: "Don't question the minister. Don't question these bills. We're going to pass them — here they are, the six-pack — six at a time. You've got to take them, whether you like it or not, six at a time, six for the price of one."

It's not bad enough that they changed the rules here; now they're going to change even their own rules. Instead of passing one bill at a time within 24 hours, they're going to pass six in a 24-hour period, with no debate, no questions. If you want to know what the Lieutenant Governor in Council may prescribe, you'll never get a chance to ask. We're the MPPs. Can you imagine the ordinary citizen in St Catharines or Wawa or Kitchener? When will they be able to find out what's in this Bill 120? When will they be able to find out what's in these bills? When will they find out what's in the six-pack? When these get passed in 24 hours, the public is being told: "We will pass six at a time. Like it or lump it." That's what they're saying.

We've got this Bill 120 before us, and as I said, it is part of a pattern which does nothing more than take care of the concerns this government has about making decisions that aren't questioned. That's what this bill does. It essentially authorizes decisions about who has to comply with regulations. That is not authorized in a public open forum. It's authorized under the auspices of the cabinet, behind closed doors.

Bill 120 may seem like an innocuous bill, and the six-pack which is going to be introduced on Monday seems innocuous, but with these six bills you're going to see on Monday, a lot of people are going to be saying, "Does this government really have to pass bills six at a time now?" That's what we've got.

In Bill 120 this government again expresses that concern about passing bills quickly because they've got to clean up red tape. The Liberal whip, the member for Kingston and The Islands, said it very succinctly: If the government thought these bills were so important, why would they sit on them for a year and a half? These red tape bills were introduced back on June 5, 1996. There's a bill on citizenship and culture that we passed today that wasn't a bad bill, but it didn't help too much. There's the Ministry of Economic Development bill to simplify government. There's another bill on the Ministry of the Environment, a Ministry of Health bill, a bill on the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines and the correctional services bill.

All these bills and Bill 120, which deals with mining, may not affect every Ontarian but they do affect certain Ontarians, and by the time we as members of this Legislature can communicate with interested Ontarians and get the information back to find out whether they have a concern, these six bills will be passed because Ontarians won't know what's in them. That's how this government works.

How can the average citizen who may be affected by what's going to be happening in the Mining Act, the average citizen who is going to be affected by changes in culture, economic development, the environment, changes in the Ministry of Health — as you know, in the Ministry of Health there are major changes, yet nobody will be able to question these.

That's why in Bill 120, as members of the opposition, it is our duty to ensure that the public can ask for copies of these bills, the public can try and ask local experts about the impacts of these bills. That's all the public is asking. The public isn't necessarily going to be opposed to a bill, but the public has the right, as electors, to be educated, a right to have input on a bill, and they do it through this House.

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But when you pass so many bills and you have closure on bill after bill after bill, it doesn't serve the public interest. It serves your special agenda, whatever it may be, good, bad or indifferent, but when you do things so rapidly, in such a sledgehammer fashion, it doesn't serve anybody well. The mad rush in democracy is full of unbelievable pitfalls. This government is saying, "We have to rush everything." Whether it be in the Mining Act, in Bill 120, or the six laws they want us to pass without debate on Monday, they say, "We've got to rush and jam this through."

I'm going to just hope and pray that the public of Ontario understands that more and more power is going behind closed doors, more and more power is regulatory power. That means the control of the \$6 billion of

education taxes is going to be done not by debate or scrutiny, it's going to be done behind closed doors, where no one can question the Minister of Education about a \$6-billion tax decision which affects every property taxpayer, every tenant, every small business person and big business person in Ontario. That decision, like in Bill 120, is going to be done by a minister and his backroom bureaucrats, whiz kids, whatever you call them, without questioning or debate or scrutiny. That is wrong.

That is not part of Ontario's parliamentary legislative tradition, because what happens when you rush things and you do things behind closed doors is the public feels left out of the process. The public gets alienated and the public is not served to its best interests, because you may be hurting someone when you make decisions behind closed doors. At least in an open forum, if these regulatory decisions about mining and the authorization to not comply to a mining provision were discussed in public, maybe someone living in a mining community in northern Ontario could stand up and say: "Wait a minute. That's wrong. It may be something that's going to harm my water supply. Perhaps that's wrong. It's going to be something that's going to cause some kind of environmental impact." But Bill 120 gives that kind of power, more and more power to ministers and their backroom bureaucrats behind closed doors. That is a dangerous and an ominous trend of this government.

As I said, we have seen nothing yet. They're not happy with just one or two bills a day. They want six bills at a shot now. How can the public ever find out what's the public interest when they don't get a chance even to debate these bills? They debate these bills through their members of Parliament. Sure, some members of this Legislature don't want any debate. Some people say they shouldn't be standing up. They say that none of us in the opposition should be standing up; we should be quiet. That's what they want. They want us to be quiet. They want us to salute everything. They want us just to vote and get out of this place. That's all they want. They don't want us to debate Bill 120.

What my constituents are saying is they want me to debate, they want me to stand up for them. They want me to question and they give me royal hell if I don't do it. That is what the public wants their MPPs to do. They don't want people who just take orders and are just robots. They want their MPPs to stand up and be heard. They don't want people just warming the seats. That's what this government wants their government members and the opposition to do.

They're saying: "We've got these six bills. Don't ask any questions. Don't raise your voice. Don't dare scrutinize what's in the bill. Don't dare debate it. Pass them. If you don't pass them, you're holding down progress and the financial future of the province and the western world." Every bill they give us the same line: "Oh, the world's going to end if you don't pass Bills 67, 69, 66, all these bills, and 120. If you don't pass these, the western economy is going to collapse."

That's what this government keeps on saying about every bill, big or small. Bill 160 was a perfect example where they said: "We're going to jam it through. Education has to have this bill. Education is going to collapse unless we get 160." The public spoke loud and clear. They said they didn't want 160 when they found out what was in that bill, when they found out what was in Veronica Lacey's contract, when they found a \$667-million time bomb in Veronica Lacey's contract, which proved the government was not being forthright when it said that bill wasn't about taking money out of education.

That's why it's important for members of the opposition to debate 120 and to debate all bills, big or small. I know the government keeps on saying: "It's not necessary. Pass it through in a half-hour." They do not like people standing up in this House and questioning them. What bothers them the most is when their motives or their bills are debated and questioned. They don't like that. You know why they don't like that? Because a lot of the material in these bills is not in the public interest. We know they're trying to extract power from the Legislature, from the public and put it in the back rooms.

As you know, Bill 26 started it all off, where they just took so much power into the back rooms that they dramatically turned the province upside down. That Bill 26 scenario continues and Bill 26 lives on in Bill 120, where there's more executive power. I know that people say this is no longer a legislative democracy; this is an executive regime now. It's executive power; executive power is all-powerful and all-knowing.

On Monday we're going to see executive power at its worst, when six bills are going to be jammed through without debate, an omnibus six-pack of closed bills with no debate. Shame on Mike Harris and the closure that he brings on this Parliament.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Questions and comments? Further debate?

Mr Gerretsen: No, questions and comments. I was waiting for somebody to get up, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: I see. Okay, member for Kingston and The Islands.

Mr Gerretsen: I want to make some comments about the eloquent comments made by the member for Oakwood and the member for St Catharines before.

It is true that on Monday this government will try by way of a closure motion to have six bills that have been around since June 1996, for a year and a half, dealt with at once. It's kind of strange that this comes from a government that wants to deal with red tape. You wonder why they haven't done that in the last year and a half. These bills have been around for almost 300 days that we've been meeting here, 300 different sessions.

Mr Ford: We're rushing it through.

Mr Gerretsen: You could have called it at any time. At any time, you could have called one of these bills and we would have debated it fully. You didn't.

Ms Mushinski: They asked for them.

Mr Gerretsen: And you didn't. As you can see by the actions earlier today, you called one of these bills, we

debated Bill 63 and then we passed it. We had some questions. I had some concerns about the Ontario Heritage Act, but I realized that those concerns could be dealt with by way of regulation and otherwise, and we passed the bill. One day of debate on third reading and the bill was passed. If you were interested in getting these bills passed earlier, why didn't you bring them forward one at a time so that we could debate?

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Hon Mr Harnick: You say this about every single bill. Why don't you ever say anything about the substance of the bill? Come on, talk about the substance of the bill.

Mr Gerretsen: I'll talk about Bill 120. I'll talk about the Ministry of Natural Resources —

Hon Mr Harnick: Every speech is the same.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. Order, please. Further questions and comments.

Mr Gerretsen: No, wait a minute now. My time is not up. Thank you. Let's just talk for a moment about the MNR employees that you fired all over the province of Ontario —

The Deputy Speaker: Okay. Questions and comments.

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough North): I listened very attentively to the members and I continue to be appalled that this government would not listen to the advice of such eloquent and informed individuals as my colleagues. They have insistently pointed out to this government that you can't just rush things through, as you're doing. You can't have great closures to everything that you have.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please.

Mr Curling: It seems to me I've touched a nerve with this government which has decided to rule with its iron fist. My understanding is that this government, which wants, very much so, to put closure on everything, to make sure that this government operates without even the people themselves — they would rather that the people go away. It's their kind of democracy.

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Parkdale): It would be a great place without people, wouldn't it?

Mr Curling: Exactly. One day you're standing up talking about recognizing human rights and the next day —

Mr Gerretsen: They're denying our right to speak.

Mr Curling: — they're denying rights for people to conduct themselves a democratic way. What type of hypocrisy do we see in a country like this? What type of hypocrisy do we have in the province that we would make sure that people be heard? We even see the contradiction of the bills in the way in which they offer and define bills in the House. I say they should listen attentively to the eloquent things —

The Deputy Speaker: Further questions and comments?

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): I've been listening very carefully to everything that's been said and

I really have no questions or comments about what the Liberals have said tonight.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East): I couldn't have picked a more accurate or pithy way to describe what I too have experienced. I appreciate the member encapsulating those comments, and I have no questions or comments either.

The Deputy Speaker: Member for Oakwood, you have two minutes to sum up.

Mr Colle: I want to thank the member for Scarborough North for his comments and appreciation for what's important in terms of the rights of this House, and the member for Kingston and The Islands. In terms of Bill 120, I think that's what we're talking about. I know this government doesn't like members of the opposition debating and questioning. Whether it's Bill 120 or other bills, they have this disdain for being questioned. They feel they have the divine right to rule this province. As I said, they felt when they won the election, they bought the business. That's what these members of the government now think.

When we stand up and question these bills for the public, they're doing everything they can to limit the questioning. As we're going to see with these bills on Monday, they're going to try and jam through without debate six bills at time. That is what is wrong with a government that is recklessly trying to essentially make a province their own little playground. That's what they're doing. They feel that anybody who questions or, as I said, debates their bills or opposes their bills has no right to do so. So what they do is always limit the debate. Every time you question a bill, every time it's controversial, limit debate. That's their response. They have done it since Bill 26 and they're going to continue to do it because they feel the public will not find out what they're doing. But the public is finding out that this government is about closing down debate and they don't want people to question them.

We will keep questioning you, we will keep criticizing you, because that's our job.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. The member's time has expired. Further debate?

Ms Martel: Before I begin my remarks with respect to Bill 120, I should just give people some indication of how long I intend to speak. Earlier I had said to the government whip that I intended to go for my whole time, up to and until he could get me a copy of the download numbers for the leader of the third party, which he has now delivered. Now I will only speak for 45 minutes, so I appreciate that. I know it's late and we all want to get out of here. Let me make a couple of comments here this evening, though.

First of all, on second reading we did support the bill and we will be supporting it on third reading. It is true that I raised concerns during the second reading debate with respect to how it was that we were very much going to guarantee that any rules that got set in place for staking were rules that were going to be environmentally sound. I was very concerned that because the bill was silent on this issue and there was a large amount of discretion left to the minister in the bill, the reverse could work and in a

particular area rules may well be developed that would be detrimental to or downgrade the environment.

After having spoken to the ADM at Northern Development and Mines, it was clarified for me that if an area is particularly environmentally sensitive, then of course the ministry does withdraw that area from staking. But under the current rules there are no provisions whatsoever to deal in areas that have not been withdrawn but that are still of concern to people from an environmental point of view of how to protect those particular areas. I am convinced, after having dealt with the ADM, that the bill as proposed will do what the ministry says it will do, which is to allow for the development of some very special rules for staking under the Mining Act in areas that have a particular sensitivity but which the government believes should still be areas open for exploration and development.

The provision, as I've been told, is going to deal very directly with the situation in Temagami, namely, how we are going to deal with the skyline reserve. The last time we dealt with this bill, I went through recommendation 22 from the Temagami Comprehensive Planning Council which listed the concern of that particular group with respect to how to deal with staking in the skyline reserve. They themselves as a group had put together a special management plan, a prescription for how very special rules would be applied, and made that recommendation to government.

I am told now that as this bill moves through, and once it is passed, that particular prescribed plan will form the basis for some negotiations with the stakeholders in Temagami to deal with the very particular concerns they have with respect to staking. I'm pleased that there is a plan that has been put together by the comprehensive planning council members in Temagami, which represented a broad cross-section of stakeholders, that the government has adopted that and, once the bill is passed, the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines staff will then proceed to have some negotiations with the stakeholders in those communities to deal with putting that plan in place. Of course, the mining community, the Temagami First Nation, the Temagami Lakes Association, the community of Temagami and others will all be involved in that process.

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I have to say, though, that as a complete contradiction to that, I just wonder how productive those discussions are going to be. I say that because in another area of Temagami, namely, Cross Lake, this government has let a particularly sensitive environmental area be opened up for motorized access, absolutely contrary to the recommendations made by the comprehensive planning council in their report to this government in April 1996. I just find the contradiction so glaring and so obvious that I can't believe for one moment that productive discussions with respect to this bill and the skyline reserve are actually going to happen and be beneficial, because I don't doubt for a second that the local people in the Temagami area have no confidence whatsoever in this government to protect the environment.

The history of what has happened at Cross Lake under this government would leave anyone who lived in that area feeling that this government couldn't care less about the environment and, frankly, couldn't care less about some of the important recommendations of the comprehensive planning council. In fact, I think any discussion that is now going to take place on the Mining Act is going to be very, very difficult because the local groups are so angry with this government with respect to its actions on Cross Lake.

Very briefly, I just want to outline the history of that situation. The comprehensive planning council made a very difficult decision with respect to Cross Lake, because there has been access into that lake for the last 50 years. But the broad stakeholders came together and made a decision that because they didn't want this very important lake to be overused, they would not allow motorized access into that particular lake. They looked at walk-in access, they made a recommendation about walk-in and they made it very clear that the group believed there should no longer be motorized access into that area, despite the pressure from anglers, particularly out of the North Bay-Nipissing district.

The government and the Minister of Natural Resources totally ignored that recommendation. The Minister of Natural Resources decided there would be motorized access into Cross Lake anyway, despite the recommendation that had been made, and this after a process of six long years to come to some kind of land use plan for that whole area.

Last October 1996 all of a sudden the Ministry of Natural Resources allowed a particular user group, the West Nipissing Access Group, to build a road right down to the shoreline. They did it without undertaking any of the requirements of the Environmental Assessment Act, particularly the class EA for small-scale MNR projects, completely in contravention of the law. This group was allowed to go in, with no EA undertaken, completely contrary to a recommendation made by the comprehensive planning council, and build a road, motorized access, right down to the shoreline.

Well, the Ministry of Natural Resources got caught and, lo and behold, last fall they had to go in and sign, barricade, try and cut off access. But they also ended up being hauled into court by another ministry in this government, namely, the Ministry of Environment and Energy, because they had failed to follow any of the rules of environmental assessment.

After that had happened and the court proceedings began, this government then indicated its intent to have access into the area and register that on the environmental registry. What they did was to pretend that nothing had happened, that there was not a road already in there, that the ministry had not already been caught, was in court, was going to be charged later on and convicted. They put out a notice in the paper which said, with respect to access to Cross Lake:

"The Ministry of Natural Resources, North Bay District, is considering the development of an access point

on Cross Lake located in Temagami township. The purpose of the project is to address the government of Ontario's response to the recommendations of the Temagami Comprehensive Planning Council. The government believes in the principle of access to Cross Lake and indicated that any new development would be planned in accordance with the regulations of the class environmental assessment for small-scale MNR projects."

This project is being planned in accordance with the class environmental assessment for small-scale projects. Well, the fact of the matter was the government had already broken a commitment that should have been made to the comprehensive planning council. It totally ignored their recommendation. The road already went in. Now the government, last December, put in a public notice saying they wanted public input with respect to a new development in the area. The development was already there, contrary to the class EA for small-scale projects, so that was an insult to all the local folks who would have been involved in this. They knew full well that the government had totally messed up on this dossier and was now trying to backtrack.

In April the MOEE laid charges against the Ministry of Natural Resources for failing to comply with the regulations and requirements of the EA Act.

Then finally in September, after repeated court dates that were postponed, the MNR was actually found guilty of allowing the road to be built without undertaking any of the terms or conditions of the class EA.

Here we are with one ministry of this government laying charges against another ministry of this government for breaching a very major act. It was a complete failure on the part of the Ministry of Natural Resources to deal with any of the requirements required by law.

A sad thing about it is that at the time, in September when MNR was found guilty, the prosecutor for the Ministry of Environment and Energy and the MNR lawyer both argued that MNR should not be punished, despite having broken the law. Despite that fact that MNR allowed a group to go in, did not undertake any of the steps necessary to do an EA in that area, got caught and got charged, the MNR and the MOEE still had the audacity in court to argue before a justice of the peace that they should in no way, shape or form be punished.

To the credit of the court and the provincial justice of the peace, today that justice of the peace has totally thrown out the argument by MNR and MOEE and actually delivered the sentence and MNR has been fined \$1,200. Also, and I want to make this clear, the justice of the peace indicated that he had a problem with the MOEE not seeking a penalty, and he also disapproved of the MNR's attempts at closing the illegal road and policing its use. Justice of the Peace Kitlar also indicated that MNR should place the appropriate signage on the road to effectively close it.

Both ministries, as far as I'm concerned, were condemned by the court with respect to their attempt to weasel out of any kind of penalty that should well be applied against the MNR for having contravened the Environmental Assessment Act. To his credit, the justice

of the peace made it very clear that not only will a fine apply but he very much condemned the actions of the two ministries in trying to avoid having any penalty paid and basically trying to say it's okay to break the law in this province and that there will be no penalty.

In the last number of months since this issue has gotten under way, certainly the Ministry of Natural Resources and frankly the MOEE have not given any confidence to the people who live in the Temagami area that they care one whit about the environment or that they care one whit about the six years of work and the report that was presented to this government in April 1996 with respect to how to develop land use planning in the Temagami area.

I think the government will live with that for a long time and it will make any kind of negotiations with respect to dealing with other environmental issues in Temagami very, very difficult. People in the local community do not have any confidence, as a result of the Cross Lake incident, that this Conservative government cares at all about the environment or is going to take any special measures to protect an area of the province that has been, for a long, long time, the source of much controversy about how to deal with conflicting land uses.

I wish the government well. It's an important discussion with respect to Bill 120 and how to develop special rules, but it sure is starting off on a very poor footing. I don't think it bodes well for the government at all, having already a very poor track record with respect to the environment, particularly Cross Lake, in terms of the negotiations that a different ministry is now going to try and enter into with respect to the skyline reserve.

In conclusion, I want to say that I'm happy to see that Bill 120 has finally become a priority for this government. It only took 10 months after the introduction of the act. I'm glad to see that the bill and its regulations have come out from under the heap, as the minister described it in his comments to some of the officials from Temagami, and will now proceed. I suspect that a lot of that pushing for it to proceed came because most people around here recognize that we will probably start a new session in the new year, and if they were going to keep the bill at all, something had to be done and had to be done very quickly so that it would not be lost completely from the legislative agenda.

I wish the ministry staff well who will have to enter into what I think are going to be some very difficult negotiations now because of what this government has already done. They are important negotiations, however, and I do hope the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines will be able to regain some confidence that I think has deservedly been lost because of the MOEE and MNR in this area and actually come up with a very productive plan that will lead to staking in this important area of the province.

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The Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener): Let me just say that I am very pleased that the member for Sudbury East is going to support this bill.

Mr Gerretsen: That was a very brief and very forceful endorsement by the member for Kitchener.

I would like to endorse the comments made by the member for Sudbury East. She certainly talked about the merits of this bill and ought to be congratulated, because she undoubtedly knows an awful lot about it. But I was most taken by the last comment she made, that this bill needs to be passed now. As we all know, the session is coming to an end and it needs to be passed now, because otherwise the bill is lost. That of course begs the question: On a bill that all parties basically agree with, why did the government wait 10 months to call this bill to the House? They could have done so at any time whatsoever in the last 150 sessions we've had here.

For them to suggest, as they did earlier this evening, that somehow the opposition is to blame because the government didn't have the nerve or the guts or the fortitude to call these bills forward, particularly this Bill 120 when they knew that it had the support of everyone, is absolutely beyond belief.

The people out there should realize that the government today filed an omnibus closure motion to have six bills that were introduced in June 1996, more than a year and a half ago, dealt with in one session when they could have dealt with them one at a time in a very orderly manner. It's absolutely disgraceful that this government should act in such a barbaric and undemocratic way. There's no question about it. If you don't believe it, read the editorial in my paper yesterday that called you a barbaric government.

Mrs Boyd: I want to congratulate the member for Sudbury East on a very pithy and logical response directed at the bill.

Mr Frank Sheehan (Lincoln): Everybody seems to be worried about us delaying bringing this bill forward, but I have to suggest to you that if you read the agenda we've been through, we were trying to soften you up and get you ready for such a major transitional bill.

The Speaker: Response, the member for Sudbury East? Nothing? Okay. Further debate; the member for Kingston and The Islands.

Ms Churley: You already debated it.

Mr Gerretsen: It may have seemed to you that I've debated this bill, and I did at second reading, but I have not debated it here this evening.

I have pointed out consistently that you should have called this bill a lot earlier and we could have dealt with it, particularly a bill that's agreed to by everyone in this House. You didn't. Earlier today, we passed Bill 63, another bill that —

Now the former minister is shaking her head. She doesn't know who is next in the debate. Madam, I would not come into this House and tell you honestly and openly that I have not debated this bill or had not spoken on it if I had. It may seem to you that I have because I've made a number of responses to some of the other speeches on this particular bill, but I have not —

The Speaker: We'll put it to bed. You haven't debated the bill, so let's debate it.

Mr Gerretsen: Thank you very much, Speaker. It's just that the former minister is getting so excited about this. It is a bill to get excited about, because it will actually cut red tape. We in this party favour the cutting of red tape in all government enterprises, provided that the environmental protections are still there for the general public. That should always be the overriding theory.

I've been convinced by the members of my own caucus and indeed by the debate that has taken place in this House that with this bill, that is so, so I understand that we will be supporting this bill.

What has to be said, though, and it's absolutely crucial that we say this once again —

Interjections.

Mr Gerretsen: Everybody wants me to sit down.

Mr Bradley: Not me.

Mr Gerretsen: Thank you very much. We live in a democracy. This is the Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario. On June 8, 1995, 130 of us were elected by the people of Ontario who came out and voted that day. At that given moment in time, they said on an individual basis, and as a result collectively, "Eighty-two of you will form the government and that government will be led by Mike Harris." They said that, but on only one day did they say that, on June 8, 1995. Everything that's happened since then has been an attack on different groups in this province.

A package has just been delivered to my House leader with, I assume, all the municipal numbers with respect to each and every municipality as it affects the Liberal caucus. I must say it's somewhat shameful that these numbers are delivered this way. We do appreciate that after it was made clear in this House earlier, in a number of different points of order and points of privilege about the fact that the government members had these figures, which had been awaited so eagerly by the general public and by the municipal tax people etc, that they had the figures and members of the opposition didn't, then the government whip did what he could to make sure we all got the numbers. He even delivered all these packages to all those people who were in the House. I thank you, sir, for doing that.

Interjections.

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke-Rexdale): Blah, blah, blah.

The Speaker: Member for Perth, member for Scarborough-Ellesmere, member for Etobicoke-Rexdale, please come to order.

Mr Hastings: No.

The Speaker: Member for Etobicoke-Rexdale, I don't want to hear that any more. The member for Kingston and The Islands has the floor properly. If you are leaving, could you do so in a quiet manner. Thank you.

Mr Hastings: No.

The Speaker: Member for Etobicoke-Rexdale, I don't want to argue with you any more.

Mr Hastings: I'm not arguing.

Mr Gerretsen: I thank the government whip for delivering the packages of the numbers that the municip-

alities have been waiting for, on a person-to-person basis. But I tell you, sir, although you may have good intentions, it is a heck of a way to run a government. Packages like this should not be delivered just to those members who happen to be here, after they have made pleas by way of points of order, points of privilege and everything else. That's not the way this should work in this place, surely. Surely government information should be shared equally with everybody.

Hon Mr Harnick: What does that have to do with the bill? Surely as a former mayor you can at least talk about the bill.

Mr Gerretsen: There we have the Attorney General. Attorney General, why are you even here? Why aren't you dealing with the recommendations contained in the Provincial Auditor's report? What about all those outstanding fines? There is \$389 million worth of outstanding fines that you should be collecting, sir.

Hon Mr Harnick: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: We would all like to hear the member's speech pertaining to the bill that's before us. I wonder if you might direct that that happen.

The Speaker: We're debating Bill 120, member for Kingston and The Islands.

Mr Gerretsen: I can well understand that Attorney General does not want me to talk about the Provincial Auditor's report, although it would be a great thing to talk about, but he doesn't want me to talk about the backlog of cases and about the outstanding fines.

The Speaker: Member for Kingston and the Islands, Bill 120.

Mr Gerretsen: Yes, I realize, and Bill 120 is a good bill and a bill that ought to be passed. I wish I could say that about more government bills that come forward, because there haven't been that many. As a matter of fact, I can't remember any that have been introduced by the Attorney General, for example. It would be interesting if he would accede one day and say, "Yes, after all the court proceedings are over and done with, we will have an inquiry on Ipperwash."

Hon Mr Harnick: What does that have to do with Bill 120? You have nothing to say.

Mr Gerretsen: I have a lot of things to say, and the people of Ontario want to say a lot of things too. They want to have the truth come out about what really happened at Ipperwash, sir. I think the only way that can happen is if we have a public inquiry. Why we don't have that kind of commitment to have an inquiry once all the court proceedings are over and done with I for the life of me can't understand. I'll let the people draw their own conclusion from that. Many of those I've talked to can come to only one conclusion.

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Certainly Bill 120 is something that is needed. We need fewer regulations within the whole mining field, but at the same time we also ought to be cognizant of why we have fewer regulations. Is it because over the last year or two this government has let go of an awful lot of the MNR employees who worked in many of the rural areas of this

province? I know that in many small townships the MNR office is a great employer and it's something that is really needed to make sure all of the various activities the Ministry of Natural Resources is involved in are properly attended to.

We all know that as a result of budget cuts in that particular department, the number of people who used to work as conservation officers are no longer there.

Interjection.

Mr Gerretsen: Mr Speaker, I now get an interjection from the Acting Speaker, a man we admire so much when he sits in the chair you're sitting in currently. I'm not sure whether we can say the same thing when he sits in the chair he's currently occupying in this House.

Bill 120 is very important and we need to deal with it.

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): We know that. Talk about it.

Mr Gerretsen: The question I have to the member for Peterborough is, why didn't you bring this forward earlier? Why do you try to blame the opposition for the fact that you haven't dealt with this bill earlier? It is hard for the people of Ontario to believe that on the basis of 45% of the popular vote that you got on June 8, 1995 —

Hon Mr Harnick: Who's blaming the opposition? Nobody's blaming the opposition.

Mr Gerretsen: Yes. Oh, you weren't here earlier. We were berated, we were — well, belittled isn't quite the right word — spoken to by the honourable government whip that we were the party, and the third party, that held up Bill 120 and some of the other red tape bills from being passed in this House. I can tell you, having accompanied my friend the Liberal House leader to many of the House leaders' meetings they've had over the last year or so, we have repeatedly said, on almost a weekly basis, to both House leaders, whoever they happened to be, and to the honourable government whip, "Bring forth the red tape bills and we will debate them one at a time." There was always a very polite smile and a nod, but nothing ever happened. He never took us up on what I thought was very good advice to bring the bills forward, and he didn't do so.

I am not going to prolong this because I know there are many other important bills we want to deal with. Maybe if we had a vote on this bill tonight we could call another one of those bills. If we dealt with another bill tonight, it would not be necessary for the government to bring in those two draconian time allocation motions. I'm not even sure whether you've seen them, Speaker, but one of them, for example, expects us to deal with six red tape bills in one closure motion the next time the bill is called. When is that? On Monday?

The other closure motion is even better than that. You may recall that last night a bill, namely Bill 164, was referred by the Minister of Finance to the committee on finance and economic affairs to be discussed and debated the way we normally do at committee. Today we have a time allocation motion that basically says that when they meet on Monday at 7 o'clock, a vote on the bill will be held immediately and it will be reported back to the House. I can only draw one conclusion from that, and I'm

sure the people of Ontario can only draw one conclusion: that there was never an intent for the committee to deal with this bill in the first place. Not to allow any debate at the committee level just isn't right. Maybe this is a new tactic or a new way for the government to deal with this kind of material.

In any event, I will wind up fairly soon. Let me just say that I don't like these tactics, and the people of Ontario don't like these tactics, of bringing in closure time after time. Just about every major bill we've dealt with over the last three or four months has been time-allocated. Closure has been invoked on them.

It is time for this government to mend its ways, to not act, as the Whig-Standard said yesterday in its editorial, "in such a barbaric fashion." Those are their words, not my words. That's what they said. That, you may recall, dealt with the closure of two institutions or two organizations that were heavily involved with the mentally ill. They were just closed. Somebody from the ministry came down and changed the locks — closed. That's what happened.

The Speaker: Bill 120.

Mr Gerretsen: Bill 120 is one of those bills we actually agree with. Having said that, I hope the government will change its ways and act in a more democratic fashion. Don't be so barbaric.

I see the Minister of Economic Development. Maybe he's got some good news for us. He's always got a smile on his face. I know there are some people in my area who actually would like to see him back as Minister of Transportation. He would have given the funding for the ferries to Wolfe Island and Howe Island. According to the community reinvestment fund, there sure isn't a lot of money for those ferries. I don't know what the heck's going to happen. We had some hope he would do something. Then, of course, we had hope when the new minister came that he would do something, and these people still don't know what's going to happen on January 1.

We can laugh about it, we can smile about it, we can do all we want about that, but it is a real problem for 2,000 Ontarians who have been cut off by this government; people who have lived there for three or four or five generations, who have their business there, who have their farms there. These people will not know how to get back and forth to the mainland. They are part of Ontario. Why are you cutting them off? It was your Conservative predecessors —

The Speaker: Bill 120.

Mr Gerretsen: I realize that, Speaker, but there is a connection. On these ferries, every now and then, there is an MNR employee who goes from the mainland to one of the islands. I'm not sure whether those people have been let go.

Those people feel cut off and they feel abandoned by their government.

Mr Colle: Peter Trueman will be cut off.

Mr Gerretsen: Peter Trueman is one of the gentlemen who live on Amherst Island. I know he's concerned as well, as are the Burkes — Stanley Burke — and many

other people. These people are concerned, and the lifelong residents of those islands as well.

I would implore this government, particularly the cabinet — there are three or four members of cabinet sitting right here, including the honourable government whip who is now a member of cabinet — to take another look at it. Try to treat everyone in Ontario with a sense of dignity and compassion. Don't cut people off at the kneecaps. Let's try to build a province together. Let's not try to pit one group in society against another group. Maybe that works for a little while and you score some points with some people, but in the long run it doesn't work. Show a bit of compassion.

Forget about the tax cut. We'll all give our tax cut back. Put some of this money back into the programs where it is needed, or if you don't want to put it into those programs, pay off some of the public debt. Put it towards this year's deficit. Do whatever you want, but don't take a tax cut because it doesn't make any sense. You're all business people. Why do you want to increase the public debt in this province from \$100 billion when you started to \$120 billion by the time you're finished? Why do you want to do that? You tell me why you want to do that. Even with the low interest rates we have in this province, we are still paying \$9.1 billion per year in interest payments.

Hon Mr Harnick: Why do you think that is?

Mr Gerretsen: I've got to respond to the Attorney General. He's a senior member of cabinet and he's blaming it on our former government.

Hon Mr Harnick: Big spenders and big taxers, you and your cousins there.

Mr Gerretsen: Let's just review the figures. Look at your own budget document. Up until 1985, public debt in this province was \$40 billion. During the Liberal regime, \$10 billion was added. That makes \$50 billion. Then during the severe times of the NDP, another \$50 billion was added. But the initial \$40 billion is your responsibility.

Interjections.

The Speaker: That's it. Stop the clock.

Member for Kingston and The Islands.

Mr Gerretsen: Thank you, Speaker. Actually my colleagues are cautioning me about chuckling at this time, and these are problems we shouldn't be chuckling about and I'll be the first to agree.

In any event, do the right thing. Treat all people in Ontario with respect, whether they're the highest-income group or the lowest-income group, because I can tell you that whether we're dealing with Bill 120 or any other bill a lot of people in this province don't think you are doing that. You are not doing that.

Thank you very much, and I hope the debate will continue further along these lines.

2050

Mrs Boyd: I want to express to the member for Kingston and The Islands how grateful I am that he has completed his participation in this debate.

The Speaker: Questions and comments.

Mr Spina: I disagree mostly with the comments the member made, but at least he said he was supporting the bill, so thank you very much. That was the objective we wanted to achieve.

Mr Bradley: You have seen yet another example of the opposition being so very cooperative when the legislation is of benefit to the province.

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): I just want to say that I am glad the member for Kingston and The Islands was brief in his comments, because he did leave a few minutes on the clock. I followed his discussion not with 100% attention, I will confess, but I followed it. I didn't find it quite as much on point as, for example, the comments made by our own colleague the member for Sudbury East, but like him, we will support the bill, and I hope we can get on with showing that in the House.

The Speaker: Response.

Mr Gerretsen: I would seek unanimous consent that I will yield my response time —

The Speaker: You can't yield your response time. Just respond or don't respond.

Mr Gerretsen: I saw the government whip getting up, Speaker, and I thought he was going to compliment me and say something nice about me, since I actually said something nice about him, or maybe he was going to set his own caucus members straight as to why —

The Speaker: Respond to the people who made questions and comments. You can't respond to people who didn't make questions and comments.

Mr Gerretsen: I appreciate that, and that's why I would like to thank the member for London Centre for her excellent remarks and her excellent account of my speech. I really appreciate her. They were very thoughtfully made.

The member for Brampton North made some excellent remarks as well.

I just want to finish off by saying that —

Hon Mr Harnick: And Tony too, the member for Dovercourt.

Mr Gerretsen: Tony too, the member for Dovercourt, made some excellent responses.

It is indeed unfortunate we couldn't get unanimous consent to allow the government whip to say something, because I'm sure the honourable government whip would have made some very adequate comments as well.

Let me just say that we agree with this bill and we will support it, but I also implore the government to try to show a little bit more compassion, especially to the most vulnerable in our province.

The Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Spina has moved third reading of Bill 120. Is it the pleasure of the House the motion carry? Carried.

Resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Hon David Turnbull (Minister without Portfolio): Mr Speaker, I move adjournment of the House.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House the motion carry? Carried.

HOUSE RECALL

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): I want to advise the House that I have received an order in council causing me to reconvene the House on Monday, December 15, 1997, at 1:30 p.m.

This House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock on Monday.

The House adjourned at 2056.

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No. 261A

N° 261A

ISSN 1180-2987

Legislative Assembly of Ontario

First Session, 36th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Première session, 36^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Monday 15 December 1997

Lundi 15 décembre 1997

Speaker
Honourable Chris Stockwell

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Président
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

Greffier
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 15 December 1997

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 15 décembre 1997

*The House met at 1331.
Prayers.*

CONSIDERATION OF LEGISLATION

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): Mr Speaker, I rise on a point of order with respect to the two time allocation motions that were tabled by the government last Thursday.

One of the motions allocates the time for consideration of six bills, Bills 63, 64, 65, 66, 68 and 69. The government has not yet informed us of when it intends to call this motion. The other motion allocates consideration of Bill 164, An Act to implement job creation measures and other measures contained in the 1997 Budget and to make other amendments to —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Member for Algoma, I don't mean to jump in too quickly, but if you give me one second: These two motions are on the order paper. As I've done in the past, I don't want to rule on these unless they're called.

Simply put, there are lots of motions that are put that are never called and ultimately never have to be ruled on by the Speaker. These could very well be part of those that aren't called. I prefer to deal with them at the time that they are called. I appreciate that puts a bit of a burden on you with respect to making your submissions because you'd have to be here at all times.

Let me just leave you with this, that I will take your submission, pass it to the Clerk and know full well that if they are called, I will presume that you will make these arguments with respect to their orderliness if you are in fact not here or another member of your caucus wants to put those. I appreciate the notice and thank you.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

PROPERTY ASSESSMENT

Mr Mario Sergio (Yorkview): We are moving from crisis to complete chaos. At a time when you thought the tax reform would bring some equity to an antiquated system, we are going into another chaos, totally, between residential and commercial-industrial property. We are pitting the residential portion versus the commercial and industrial sector.

There was a time when we were looking and bringing some equity to the tax reform system. Now we have a

minister who has reserved for himself total, extraordinary power to adjust and readjust the tax rate in the industrial-commercial area according to his own whim, at any particular time, whenever he wants. This is not just or fair; this is not tax reform the way we were hoping. The business community knows that and they are waking up to the problems this government is creating. Instead of bringing some fairness and equity to an antiquated system, bringing some justice to the small business community, they are pitting one against the other.

Let me tell you this: When the community finally finds out about the extraordinary powers that Bill 160 gives to the minister, they are going to revolt. This is totally unfair, that the minister is using this power to really divide these communities. If the minister is not going to use this power, why then doesn't he repeal this particular section of Bill 160? I think he should be doing that, in total fairness to both the residential —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION

Mr Wayne Lessard (Windsor-Riverside): Last week, Bud Jimmerfield, past president of CAW Local 89, was informed by the Workers' Compensation Board that his claim had been denied. It's significant in this case because Bud Jimmerfield suffers from cancer of the esophagus, a condition he became aware of over one year ago. He worked for 31 years at SKD, an auto parts manufacturer in Amherstburg, and was exposed to metal-working fluids throughout his employment.

Studies in the United States have found a high incidence of cancer of the esophagus among employees exposed to metal-working fluids. In 1993 the Occupational Disease Panel conducted a similar investigation, and in 1996 recommended that the WCB list cancer of the esophagus, as they concluded there was a strong possibility that workers who developed this cancer after having been exposed to metalcutting fluids over a long period did so as a result of their workplace exposure.

Despite this evidence in the United States and Canada, and despite the recommendations of the Occupational Disease Panel recognizing that link and despite the evidence in the case of Bud Jimmerfield, the Workers' Compensation Board has denied his claim, as they appear to routinely deny cases of occupational diseases. This government's response to people like Bud Jimmerfield has been to reduce benefits to injured workers, to restrict their entitlement and to entirely eliminate the Occupational

Disease Panel and endanger the health and safety of workers exposed to cancer-causing fluids in their work environment.

TORONTO CONGRESS CENTRE

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke-Rexdale): I'm pleased to inform the House of the expansion of a very important Etobicoke-Rexdale business: the Toronto Congress Centre. It is making an announcement very shortly about the expansion of its facility on Dixon Road that will make the Toronto Congress Centre the largest convention centre in the city of Toronto and will also make it the largest privately owned convention centre in the world.

As it currently stands, the Toronto Congress Centre creates an estimated 1,300 permanent jobs and injects an estimated \$37 million into the Toronto economy with its high-value jobs. Obviously these numbers will increase when the centre doubles its capacity to one million square feet, making it one of the five largest trade convention centres in North America.

I would like to take this moment to thank and congratulate Mr Alain Sutton, chief executive officer of the Toronto Congress Centre, and his wonderful wife, Deborah Sutton, for making this economic projection a reality in 1998 and making Toronto a more prosperous, unified city.

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur): If the people of Ontario need any further explanation of why the Mike Harris government cannot be trusted and certainly should not be believed when they make a public pronouncement, the release this past Friday of the municipality-by-municipality downloading figures should put that issue to rest. After months and months of promising that their downloading responsibilities would be revenue-neutral, the shocking truth was revealed.

Our municipal leaders tell us they must make millions of dollars in cuts before they can even qualify for the transition fund the government will temporarily put in place. The fact is it's nothing more than a form of blackmail if that's the case. Who will pay for this? The property taxpayers, either with massive service cuts or massive property tax increases.

In my home town of Thunder Bay, city council must cut \$7.1 million out of their budget right off the top. This is not the deal you promised, Mr Eves and Mr Harris, and the people won't forget it.

What makes this all the more galling is that the cost and potential revenues the province have calculated seem to be pulled out of thin air. In Thunder Bay's case, the province says our social assistance costs should be \$10.6 million, while the city administration calculates it at \$12 million; another \$1.5-million difference the property taxpayers will have to come up with.

Smaller communities in northwestern Ontario, like Schreiber for example, may be in even deeper trouble.

Premier, how can you expect Schreiber, with its low commercial tax base, to cut out a further \$100,000, off the top, from their budget, when they've already got it cut to the bone?

It's awful what this government has done to northern municipalities and all the ones across the province.

1340

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): Revenue-neutral, eh? This government said their downloading exercise was not going to cost any of us anything. Well, in my home town of Hamilton, for the regional government we're talking of \$17 million that our people have to come up with or cut services. In Hamilton city proper, at the lower level, they have to come up with \$6.8 million, and that is before we had had a chance to analyse your numbers. We know that with the numbers this government has come up with versus our local numbers, there's been a gap as huge as the Grand Canyon.

What did the Hamilton Spectator editorial say today? In part, they said, "But to the Harris government"—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Stop the clock. Hold on. I need some order, and I need order back here too. If you are going to meet, could you go out there and meet? Thanks, guys.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): Skarica was right —

Interjections.

The Speaker: Member for Algoma. Member for Etobicoke-Humber. These are statements. Every member deserves to have their statement heard and I couldn't hear the member for Hamilton Centre.

Mr Christopherson: Thank you, Speaker. I think it's the first time anybody in this place has claimed they couldn't hear me.

To go on with the quote from the Hamilton Spectator editorial, "This is more like a government dumping services on to other smaller governments so that Ontario's books look better, perhaps to make it easier to eliminate the deficit or deliver promised tax cuts, but without much regard for the welfare of those who will eventually be most affected by the transfer of services."

And look at the headline from the Spectator on the weekend, "Hike User Fees to Cope"; that's Pettit's answer, "Hike user fees." Way to go, Trevor. You and Lillian are doing just a great job of representing our people. When are you going to speak for our citizens, instead of Mike Harris?

MULTICULTURAL CELEBRATIONS

Mr Jim Brown (Scarborough West): At this time of year in the cold, dark months of winter, Canadians join other peoples around the world in celebrating the miracle of light, with festivities and celebrations in December. Our celebration of light in the dark month of December is a symbol of hope and has a deeply multicultural character which truly defines our national identity.

For example, the Christmas lights that we see everywhere herald the advent of Christmas. Christmas lights

were derived from the Irish practice of placing a candle in the window during the penal times of religious persecution. Irish priests who were being hunted knew that the candles marked the homes where they could seek protection for the night, so an international Christmas tradition was born.

The Canadian Jewish community celebrates Hanukkah this month to commemorate the lamp in the restored temple that burned for eight days on a single day's fuel. Earlier we marked the Hindu feast of lights, Diwali, and at this time is enlightenment day in the Buddhist community, marking the total awareness of Buddha. African-Canadians will also celebrate the feast of Kwang-Za following Christmas, and December 31 marks the beginning of Ramadan, when Muslims begin their fasting, again as a way to seek enlightenment.

Canadians are truly blessed to be able to share in each others' multicultural celebrations. I know I have learned a great deal from the multicultural traditions of my constituents. I would like to take this opportunity to say to all Ontarians Merry Christmas, Shalom Aleichem, Namastay and Salaam Alekum.

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex South): If the Mike Harris downloading exercise wasn't so serious, what I have to say to you today would be almost laughable. When you look at the final figures for Pelee township, the little island of Pelee out in the middle of Lake Erie — final figures — the minister says, "We're going to download to you \$32,000 for social housing." If you can find any social housing on Pelee Island, I'd like you to show me where it is. They take care of their own over there and they don't depend on the government.

Now we're meeting with the minister this afternoon. The Minister of Transportation has said: "We're going to download \$2.1 million on the fewer than 300 residents on Pelee Island. How are we going to do that? We're going to take \$2.4 million off your educational tax." They've got a little school over on Pelee Island. If they paid \$2.4 million a year in tax, that would mean about \$20,000 per person. That's ridiculous.

Your figures are wrong. The figures you've given all year have been wrong. These, I say to the Minister of Finance, are so utterly ridiculous that it shouldn't even —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you. The member's time has expired.

UNEMPLOYMENT

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): We've heard a lot over the last number of months in this province about youth unemployment and the challenge that communities face finding work for their young people. I raised in the House last week the reality of older workers and what they're facing. Many of them are losing their jobs under the guise of downsizing and restructuring, only to be replaced weeks or months later with two or three part-time

workers. This is really disturbing, particularly when you consider that most of these people are a matter of a year or two from collecting the pension they've paid into and are being stiffed.

This is all part of the right-wing agenda that is being promoted by this government. We have youth unemployment at alarming rates and we have older workers losing their jobs to part-time workers, while the major corporations shedding their workers are recording, every time we turn around, historically record-high profits.

This, when you combine it with the statistics that come out from this government and other governments to say that their program is working, is misleading and skewing the statistics, to say the least. We have older workers losing their jobs and not being able to apply at the EI offices until they run out of their severance package money, and at the same time, the part-time workers who are hired are taken off the rolls and become part of the statistics of the newly employed.

YMCA OF SARNIA

Mr Dave Boushy (Sarnia): Another dream was recently cemented in Sarnia with the grand opening of our new YMCA building. Our Honourable Lieutenant Governor was present at the culmination of this project that united our community in cooperation, and she officially opened the centre.

The \$10-million centre has been a rallying point of goodwill. The province of Ontario provided about \$2 million to boost the project and our community followed up with outstanding donations and support. The new centre is deservedly called the Jerry McCaw Family Centre, after a family who loves our community so much that they donated \$1 million to support future generations of youth.

The YMCA of Sarnia-Lambton has been a leading social service agency, offering programs and services to people of all walks of life. It's a place where an individual can feel welcome regardless of race, religion or economic status. The proud history of the YMCA in Sarnia began in 1917 because of the community-minded people, and with the continued support of caring families and individuals, the YMCA will continue to serve our community well into 21st century.

The name Jerry McCaw was added to the centre because of his prominent role in our community. I know Mr and Mrs McCaw very well. In fact, they are my neighbours, and from personal experience I can tell you they're outstanding people. I also know many of the individuals on the YMCA's board of directors on a personal basis, as well as the executive director, Tony Pacheco. They deserve tremendous praise for the way they went about building this new centre —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you.

1350

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON
GENERAL GOVERNMENT

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on general government and move its adoption.

Clerk at the Table (Ms Lisa Freedman): Your committee begs to report the following bill without amendment:

Bill 166, An Act to protect Persons from Liability in respect of Voluntary Emergency Medical or First Aid Services.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Shall Bill 166 be ordered for third reading? Agreed.

Mr O'Toole: I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on general government and move its adoption.

Clerk at the Table: Your committee begs to report the following bill, as amended:

Bill 139, An Act to promote the conservation of fish and wildlife through the revision of the Game and Fish Act.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Shall Bill 139 be ordered for third reading? Agreed.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

NORTHERN SERVICES
IMPROVEMENT ACT, 1997LOI DE 1997 SUR L'AMÉLIORATION
DES SERVICES PUBLICS
DANS LE NORD DE L'ONTARIO

Mr Hodgson moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 174, An Act to provide choice and flexibility to Northern Residents in the establishment of service delivery mechanisms that recognize the unique circumstances of Northern Ontario and to allow increased efficiency and accountability in Area-wide service delivery / Projet de loi 174, Loi visant à offrir aux résidents du Nord plus de choix et de souplesse dans la mise en place de mécanismes de prestation des services qui tiennent compte de la situation unique du Nord de l'Ontario et à permettre l'accroissement de l'efficacité et de la responsabilité en ce qui concerne la prestation des services à l'échelle régionale.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

SUPPLY ACT, 1997

LOI DE CRÉDITS DE 1997

Mr Eves moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 175, An Act to authorize the payment of certain amounts for the Public Service for the fiscal year ending on March 31, 1998 / Projet de loi 175, Loi autorisant le paiement de certaines sommes destinées à la fonction publique pour l'exercice se terminant le 31 mars 1998.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

METROPOLITAN TORONTO
MARINE ENVIRONMENT
PROTECTION ZONE ACT, 1997LOI DE 1997 SUR LA ZONE
DE PROTECTION DE
L'ENVIRONNEMENT MARIN
DE L'AGGLOMÉRATION URBAINE
DE TORONTO

Mr Jim Brown moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 176, An Act to provide for the protection of the marine environment of Lake Ontario in the area of Metropolitan Toronto / Projet de loi 176, Loi visant à protéger l'environnement marin du lac Ontario dans la région de l'agglomération urbaine de Toronto.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr Jim Brown (Scarborough West): This bill prohibits persons from discharging contaminants, erecting structures or carrying on other activities that may cause an adverse effect in an area called the Metropolitan Toronto marine environment protection zone, except in limited cases if the person has obtained a certificate of approval from the director in the Environmental Protection Act.

The zone consists of the land covered by Lake Ontario up to a depth of 65 metres from the shoreline in most of the municipality of Metropolitan Toronto.

MOTIONS

STANDING COMMITTEE ON
REGULATIONS AND PRIVATE BILLS

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): I move that standing order 86 respecting notice of committee hearings be suspended for consideration of Bills Pr94, Pr95 and Pr96 by the standing committee on regulations and private bills on Wednesday 17 December, 1997.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

ECONOMIC STATEMENT

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): I am pleased to provide the Legislature and the people of Ontario with a statement on the condition of the province's finances and a report on the Ontario economy.

Since June 1995, the government has followed its plan and kept its promises to the people of Ontario. The numbers prove that the plan is working for Ontarians. Real economic growth at 4.4% for 1997 proves it; 204,000 new private sector jobs in the last nine months show it; a 27% increase in housing starts so far this year supports it; and high consumer and business confidence numbers provide positive proof that our plan is working.

Ontario's second-quarter finances show that the government's balanced budget plan is on schedule. The deficit for the fiscal year 1997-98 will decline to \$5.6 billion from the \$6.6 billion projected in the 1997 budget.

Some argue that the province's recent economic and fiscal performance warrants a return to the old policies of "Tax and spend." While a great deal has been accomplished to date, there are five billion, six hundred million reasons why the job is not done and our commitment to fiscal responsibility must continue.

For many years governments mortgaged and remortgaged the future generations' prosperity and the future of Ontario's economy. The debt grew out of control. Debt more than doubled in the period 1990 to 1995 and tripled in the 10 years between 1985 and 1995.

Ontario now spends \$9 billion a year just to pay the interest on the debt. To put this \$9 billion a year in perspective, this amount is 35% more than the cost of funding all of Ontario's hospitals this year. That \$9 billion in interest is equivalent to \$2,000 from every person who pays personal income tax in the province of Ontario, or, to put it in another perspective, this would be the entire amount of Ontario income tax paid by a single person earning \$31,640 in 1997. That's just to pay the interest on the debt.

Every dollar spent on interest payments is a dollar that could have gone to pay for priority services. It is a dollar that could have been used to invest in health care. It is a dollar that could have been used to invest in education. It is a dollar that could have been used to reduce taxes.

The government is making solid progress on our plan to bring the deficit to zero by the end of the 2000-01 fiscal year. To achieve this, the provincial economy will have to remain strong, and we must continue to improve the environment for jobs and investments in Ontario.

Tax cuts are playing a key role. In our first two budgets we have announced 30 tax reductions, including cuts to personal income taxes and cuts to payroll taxes. Tax cuts do create jobs.

The federal government should cut unemployment insurance premiums to \$2.20 per \$100 of insurable earnings

and they should do it now. The federal government should also eliminate EI premiums for youth today to create much-needed and immediate job opportunities for our young people.

1400

When the government assumed office almost two and a half years ago, we knew we had to put a stop to out-of-control spending. The government must continue to make difficult spending decisions that are required to balance the budget. The government is just over halfway to that goal. The province still spends \$640,000 more each hour than it takes in in revenue. At the halfway mark, much remains to be done.

Individuals and families understand they cannot spend more money than they have. Taxpayers have accepted the fact that government too cannot spend money it does not have. All of the public sector must do its part. Taxpayers have told us that spending must be affordable. Spending must be flexible. Greater certainty of funding would support better expenditure planning and management. Those in the best position to decide where to spend must be given the authority to make those decisions, and they must be held accountable for the results of the decisions they make.

To align spending with the plan to balance the budget, the government is proposing to establish two-year funding allocations for health, schools and post-secondary education. The allocations will reflect both the amount necessary to support priority services and what Ontario taxpayers can afford. Once these allocations are set, the government will work with its partners in these sectors to meet the needs of their communities from within these allocations and their other resources.

No one denies the challenge that's involved. The allocations and the other sources of funding that sectors have available will provide a flexible, certain and accountable approach to meeting the challenge.

This government remains committed to the principles of pay equity. Ministries will continue to ensure that pay equity funds are being provided for eligible pay equity costs. Consistent with Justice O'Leary's ruling that government resources be distributed fairly and equitably among all groups, I am announcing that the government will provide \$140 million this year for one-time retroactive payments to cover proxy pay equity costs. The government will ask employees and employers to agree upon the fairest distribution of the \$500 million in annual support for pay equity that the province is committed to providing. This is the highest level in the province's history and higher than any other province in Canada. This funding level balances the importance of the program with what taxpayers can afford at this time.

The government recognizes that upfront investments are needed to change the way services are provided and to support the transition to smarter spending and serving better. Second-quarter Ontario finances provide an additional \$900 million for restructuring and other charges beyond the \$610 million already provided for in the 1997 budget.

We are making the necessary decisions to reform Ontario's health care system to better meet our health care needs. The goal is to ensure that Ontarians receive high-quality health services at each stage of their lives. In each year since we took office, the government has increased spending on health care. In 1995-96, we spent \$17.6 billion on operational costs in the health care system; in 1996-97, operating spending was increased to \$17.8 billion; this year the government will spend approximately \$18 billion providing operating health services to the people of Ontario.

Today the government is announcing an operating envelope that will increase funding for operating health care services to \$18.2 billion in 1998-99 and \$18.3 billion in 1999-2000. I point out that this amount does not include expenditures on capital and restructuring. This funding envelope will allow for the necessary continued reinvestment in community-based health services. Finding this amount of funding will not be easy. In addition to cutting taxes to create jobs, we are looking to the federal government to respond to the needs of the people of Ontario by restoring the \$2.1 billion in federal cuts to health care and post-secondary education in Ontario.

The government is also fully committed to students in Ontario receiving a quality education.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order. Member for St Catharines, Minister of Energy, come to order.

Mr Mario Sergio (Yorkview): It's not helping Metro at all.

The Speaker: Member for Yorkview, you're in the wrong seat, I think.

Hon Mr Eves: The government will ensure stable and secure funding for schools during the January to August 1998 transition to the new school year. School funding envelopes for the two years beginning September 1998 will be announced early in the new year.

In the 1997 Ontario budget the government invited teachers to join with us in providing a voluntary early retirement benefit for teachers. The government made a provision of \$250 million in the 1996-97 fiscal year for the province's share of this \$500-million initiative. The amount will be sufficient to provide, for example, eligibility for an unreduced pension for those with factor 86. The early retirement program would be paid for by the teachers' pension plan, the cost to be shared with teachers on an equal 50-50 basis.

Today I am repeating the government's offer. In our consultations many teachers have told us that they would welcome such an option. The offer has been on the table since May 6 of this year and remains there. I am hopeful that discussions will take place over the next three months so that a factor 86 retirement benefit, or perhaps even factor 85, can be made available by the end of the 1997-98 fiscal year.

The post-secondary education system must manage its resources carefully to ensure that Ontario maintains its outstanding system of post-secondary education and research. This government is committing to a two-year

budget for post-secondary education, including student assistance, starting at \$2.79 billion for 1998-99, up \$30 million from this fiscal year, and growing to \$2.84 billion in 1999-2000, up \$80 million from this year.

No university or college will be required to raise tuition in either 1998-99 or 1999-2000. Boards of governors at universities and colleges may, where they deem it necessary to improve the quality of student programs, increase average tuition fees by up to 5% in 1998-99 and a further 5% in 1999-2000. If boards of governors decide to invest in additional educational program improvements, they may choose to approve an additional increase of up to 5% in each of these two years.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Opposition members, I want you to come to order, please. I'm having a great deal of difficulty hearing the minister and I want to let you know that —

Interjection.

The Speaker: Member for Yorkview, come to order, please. It's very difficult to hear the Minister of Finance. I want to hear what he's saying and I ask the opposition to come to order, please.

Hon Mr Eves: Individual institutions will also have discretion to set tuition fees for graduate and professional programs at universities, for post-diploma programs at colleges and for other college programs where job opportunities for graduates are virtually guaranteed and income after graduation is substantial.

The government is well aware of the rising debt loads facing students and the different earning capacity of students graduating from different programs. Colleges and universities that choose to increase their fees will be required to set aside a portion of their operational grants equal to 30% of any new revenues from tuition increases for the purpose of providing assistance to students in need. This is consistent with the recommendation of the Smith advisory panel on post-secondary education that institutions charging higher fees be required to devote 30% of the increase to student aid.

This action further builds on the success of the Ontario student opportunities trust fund program, which will assist approximately 180,000 qualified students over the next decade by creating permanent trust funds with assets of approximately \$600 to date.

1410

Finally, within this new tuition policy framework, the government will require institutions to increase fees to help address shortages in scientific and technical programs where demand from prospective students and employers greatly exceeds the places available. The Honourable Dave Johnson, Minister of Education and Training, will provide details on these measures.

In addition, as the first ministers have just agreed, we are committed to working with the federal government on guaranteed access to post-secondary education for all qualified students, income-contingent student loan programs, and a review of students' total debt levels.

The evidence is clear: The government's plan is working for Ontario. All indicators lead to this conclusion.

When Ontarians told the government to cut taxes, spend their money more wisely and let the private sector get on with creating jobs and investments, they were right. Ontario has once again become one of the best places in the world in which to live, work and invest. With the commitment and the measures outlined today, our government is confident that Ontario will continue to prosper, both economically and socially, into the next millennium.

While we all feel a sense of accomplishment, we must not forget that the job is not yet done. Ontario's debt continues to grow. The province must manage its finances carefully. Otherwise, we will leave young Ontarians with an overdue bill from a maxed-out credit card.

We are resolved to tackle this significant threat and look forward to an Ontario where all taxpayers' dollars can go to those things which are the hallmarks of this great province: social justice, first-class health care, quality education and support for those truly in need. The people of Ontario, the children of Ontario, deserve no less.

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): I want to respond to the minister's economic statement on behalf of my party, the Ontario Liberal Party.

The first thing I would remind the Deputy Premier and all members of the government is that an economic statement is more than just a financial statement; it's a statement of values. It's quite apparent from this statement that this government places a tremendous amount of value on the tax cut, a tax cut that is going to cost this province \$5.5 billion when fully implemented and that over the lifetime of this government will cost some \$15 billion, every penny of which will be borrowed.

What this government is saying is that it values a tax cut ahead of quality health care for our sick. This government is saying they value the tax cut ahead of —

Interjection.

The Speaker: Member for Etobicoke-Rexdale, come to order. I don't want to hear you say that again. If you do, I will name you.

Mr McGuinty: What this government is saying is that it values a tax cut ahead of a quality education for our children in primary school and high school. What this government is saying is that they value a tax cut ahead of good child protection programs in Ontario. What this government is saying is that they value a tax cut ahead of decent post-secondary programs for our students who are looking for ways to embrace the 21st century and a knowledge-based global economy. What this government is saying is that they value a tax cut ahead of a program that could be designed to attack youth unemployment in Ontario.

The minister stands there and boasts that he's got his fiscal house in order. I think it's important for us to understand just how he did this.

First of all, he did it by stealing \$590 million, or adding \$590 million in new costs to our municipalities. He then starved our hospitals of \$800 million. He has cut, to date, \$500 million from education in Ontario, and we understand from a leaked document that he will in the future be taking another \$700 million away from education.

He has been cutting services like junior kindergarten, adult education and special education. That's how we've come to be in the financial position we are in today. He has also been taxing our seniors with new drug user fees and he's on the path now to destroying some of the things that have made this province a great province, like our natural environment and our social programs.

What this government doesn't understand is that according to our history, and Bill Davis understood this only too well, government has a continuing positive role to play in lending shape to the forces that act on all of us.

Let's just for a moment — because we all understand now how important education is to our future — understand what this government is doing to post-secondary education. First of all, our students now have on average a debt load of \$25,000. They've had to contend with a 30% tuition fee increase authorized by this government. What are they doing now in this statement today? First of all, they enable our universities in Ontario to raise tuition fees between now and the year 2000 by a further 20%. That's the kind of assistance, that's the kind of help they're going to lend to our students who right now are under a tremendous debt load. They're going to allow universities to increase tuition fees by another 20%.

Furthermore, if my understanding of this statement is correct, this government is going to give an unfettered discretion to our universities to raise tuition fees for graduate level programs in an unlimited way. There will be no limit whatsoever on that.

We understand that if we're going to make it we've got to make sure we continue to invest in our people. I ask this government to consider just for a moment: What is of greater value to Ontarians and our future, investing in a tax cut or investing in people by means of quality education, investing in a tax cut or looking after our sick by making sure we have an adequate number of nurses on our hospital floors and an adequate number of hospitals in Ontario to meet their needs?

I ask them to consider once more and reflect upon this when it comes to our values, because I think I speak for the values of Ontarians when I say, as well, what is more important, a tax cut or making sure we have the kinds of social programs that are in place so that if one of us just happens to slip and fall along the way, there will be the necessary assistance in place to get us up and on our feet and moving again? That's been our history in this province. That's what we've always been all about, until this point in time.

I want to make it clear that their values are not my values, and I think I speak for the values of Ontarians when we say that we cannot afford a tax cut right now and we'd rather invest in health care, education and social programs so we can be both fiscally responsible and caring and compassionate.

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): There is a tremendous rhetoric in this statement from the Deputy Premier and Minister of Finance, and I think we owe it to the people of Ontario to unfold some of this rhetoric. First of all, what the government has done, and they started this

three years ago, is it has overestimated the deficit. Each year they overestimate the deficit by about \$300 million or \$400 million; then each year they underestimate their tax revenue; and at the end of the year they fold in the overestimation of the deficit and the underestimation of revenue and say, "My, what a good job we've done." Except this year they've gone one better: They've had a \$600-million reserve fund. They've slid that in there too, to say, "My, what a good job we've done."

If you check the fine print, there is no more reserve fund. This is the shell game: Overestimate the deficit, underestimate the revenue, then slide in the reserve fund and hope no one is noticing. That's the reality of what's happening here.

The reality goes beyond that. At the bottom of it, this is a government that says —

Interjections.

The Speaker: Hold on. Member for Ottawa-Rideau, member for Oxford, would you please come to order. I want to hear the third party's comments and it's very difficult when you're heckling.

Mr Hampton: It goes further than that. This is a government that boasts that it can afford a \$5-billion tax gift which will go overwhelmingly to the wealthiest people in this province. It boasts about that.

Then it comes in here and tries to tell people that it's doing wonderful things for health care. Let's examine what they're doing for health care. If you look at the number for health care, the number the minister just referred to, health care funding does not keep pace with inflation, it does not keep pace with the growth in population of the province and it does not keep pace with an aging population.

What is in fact happening is that health care for citizens across this province is being cut. But that's by design, because what the government wants to do is privatize more and more of the health care system. We are seeing it right now in terms of long-term care. People who need long-term-care services are being told in community after community, "You have to pay for it yourself, out of your own pocket." We're seeing home care turned over to for-profit corporations. We are seeing more and more of those services that are supposed to be provided by community care access centres — they can't provide it because they don't have the budget, so people have to go out and purchase health care out of their own pocket. It's the privatization of health care. The government can afford a \$5-billion tax gift to the wealthiest people in the province but it can't afford health care for the people in this province who need it most.

Then the Minister of Finance boasts that he's going to give two-year funding to hospitals, to universities and to schools. I've searched for the number for hospitals and it's not here. Then I searched for the number for universities and it's not here either. There's some language we need to look at, but the number isn't there. Finally, the best they can say about funding for schools is that some time next year they'll announce the funding formula. My God, they've been saying that now for four months.

What is happening here is what the mayor of Toronto, Mel Lastman, referred to. He said: "Why should I trust them? Now I know how the teachers, the doctors, the hospital workers, the government unions, the nurses, the police officers, the universities, the students, the firefighters and every other group from across the province feels." They haven't seen you come up with the numbers before. Why should they trust you now? Why should Mel Lastman and the people of Toronto trust you? Why should schools trust you? They know a cut is coming. Why should municipalities ever trust you again? Why should universities ever trust you?

On that subject, what we find here is essentially the deregulation of tuition fees: a 5% increase in tuition next year — this coming year — 5% after that and the deregulation of tuition fees. The debt of students has gone from \$7,000 per student 10 years ago to \$25,000 per student today, and under this government's deregulation of tuition it was headed for \$60,000 per student.

What does it amount to? A tax gift for the wealthy, and everybody else in this province is paying: municipalities, health care, schools, students.

DEFERRED VOTES

HOUSE SITTINGS

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): There is a deferred vote on notice of motion number 55. This will be a 5-minute bell. Call in the members.

The division bells rang from 1425 to 1430.

The Speaker: House calendar motion number 55 moved by Mr Turnbull: All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Agostino, Dominic
 Arnott, Ted
 Baird, John R.
 Barrett, Toby
 Bassett, Isabel
 Beaubien, Marcel
 Boushy, Dave
 Bradley, James J.
 Brown, Jim
 Brown, Michael A.
 Caplan, David
 Carr, Gary
 Carroll, Jack
 Chudleigh, Ted
 Cleary, John C.
 Clement, Tony
 Colle, Mike
 Cordiano, Joseph
 Crozier, Bruce
 Cullen, Alex
 Cunningham, Dianne
 Curling, Alvin
 Danford, Harry
 Duncan, Dwight
 Ecker, Janet
 Elliott, Brenda
 Eves, Ernie L.

Galt, Doug
 Gerretsen, John
 Gilchrist, Steve
 Gravelle, Michael
 Grimmett, Bill
 Guzzo, Garry J.
 Hardeman, Ernie
 Hamick, Charles
 Hastings, John
 Hodgson, Chris
 Hoy, Pat
 Hudak, Tim
 Jackson, Cameron
 Johns, Helen
 Johnson, Bert
 Johnson, David
 Johnson, Ron
 Kells, Morley
 Kwinter, Monte
 Lalonde, Jean-Marc
 Leach, Al
 Leadston, Gary L.
 Marland, Margaret
 Maves, Bart
 McGuinty, Dalton
 McLean, Allan K.
 McLeod, Lyn

Ouellette, Jerry J.
 Palladini, Al
 Parker, John L.
 Pettit, Trevor
 Phillips, Gerry
 Preston, Peter
 Ramsay, David
 Rollins, E.J. Douglas
 Ross, Lillian
 Runciman, Robert W.
 Ruprecht, Tony
 Saunderson, William
 Sergio, Mario
 Shea, Derwyn
 Sheehan, Frank
 Smith, Bruce
 Snobelen, John
 Spina, Joseph
 Sterling, Norman W.
 Stewart, R. Gary
 Tascona, Joseph N.
 Tilson, David
 Tsubouchi, David H.
 Turnbull, David
 Vankoughnet, Bill
 Villeneuve, Noble
 Wettlaufer, Wayne

Fisher, Barbara
Flaherty, Jim
Ford, Douglas B.
Fox, Gary
Froese, Tom

Munro, Julia
Mushinski, Marilyn
Newman, Dan
O'Toole, John

Wilson, Jim
Witmer, Elizabeth
Wood, Bob
Young, Terence H.

The Speaker: All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Bisson, Gilles
Boyd, Marion
Christopherson, David
Churley, Marilyn
Hampton, Howard

Kormos, Peter
Lessard, Wayne
Marchese, Rosario
Martin, Tony

North, Peter
Pouliot, Gilles
Silipo, Tony
Wildman, Bud

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 94; the nays are 13.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

ORAL QUESTIONS

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs. You will know that for the past year we have been engaged in a massive exercise you call downloading. You're going to be handing down some responsibilities to our municipalities. The concern from the outset has been that this would not be revenue-neutral and that this was going to be a cash grab in order to finance your tax cut. But throughout we've received your assurances that this would be revenue-neutral, that there was no need to worry whatsoever. My question quite simply is this: Why have you betrayed Ontario property taxpayers? Why are you going to stick them with a \$590-million property tax hike?

Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): In response to the Leader of the Opposition, I can tell him that the Who Does What trades are revenue-neutral. We've always said that and they are.

What municipalities asked us to do was to include the effect of the removal of the municipal support grant, which they were advised several years ago would be gone. In August 1995, at the AMO speech, I advised the municipalities that we were reducing the municipal support grant and it would be eventually eliminated. That's the effect of the cost on the municipalities. The Who Does What trades are revenue-neutral province-wide.

Mr McGuinty: You promised that it was going to be revenue-neutral. You yourself said it was going to be a wash, and everybody took you at your word. They said: "All right. Surely we can rely on the Minister of Municipal Affairs, surely we can rely on the Premier of Ontario to tell us the truth when they tell us that this is going to be revenue-neutral."

I'm going to ask you once again: Why did you change your mind? Why is it that property taxpayers throughout

the province are now being stuck with \$590 million in additional costs?

Hon Mr Leach: I can say that would go under the category of another promise kept, because we said it would be revenue-neutral and it is revenue-neutral.

Mr Mike Colle (Oakwood): No shit.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Member for Oakwood, I ask you to withdraw that comment.

Mr Colle: I withdraw.

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon Mr Leach: The effect on the municipalities is as a result of a request of the municipalities to include the effect of the municipal support grant in the calculations. They asked that so they could have a clear picture of what the bottom line would be, so we did that, and again to repeat, the province-wide effect as a result of the Who Does What swaps is revenue-neutral.

Mr McGuinty: I'm going to encourage the minister to leave this building in the very near future and go to talk to people outside. They don't for one instant believe that this is a revenue-neutral exercise, and what really bothers them is that you promised that it was going to be revenue-neutral. You said it was going to be a wash, and they relied on that. That's why they participated in this exercise. They feared that what this was really all about was a cash grab to pay for your tax cut, but now we find out that it's exactly what we predicted it would be: It's an additional \$600 million on property taxes throughout the province.

I want to ask you once again, because this question is not going to leave you from now until the time of the next election: Why is it that you have changed your mind and you have now decided to saddle property taxpayers in Ontario with an additional \$590 million in new costs?

Hon Mr Leach: In response to the member of the opposition, I guess I really do have to come forward and say that it's not revenue-neutral; it's actually \$60 million in favour of the municipalities.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon Mr Leach: Just so the members of the opposition are well aware, I'll have a copy of this distributed to each one of them so they'll have some idea of what they're talking about.

1440

The Speaker: New question, leader of the official opposition.

Mr McGuinty: I guess that settles it. We'll just get those numbers and we can all go home.

I'm back to the same minister, and I've got his numbers. These are numbers from your ministry. I can say one thing with absolute confidence. These numbers don't lie; others may, but these numbers don't.

Let me tell you what they say: For the city of Hamilton \$6.8 million in new costs; Kingston, \$4.8 million in new costs; Windsor, \$9.8 million in new costs; Sault Ste Marie \$2.02 million; Toronto \$163 million; Thunder Bay \$7.1 million, and on and on and on.

The Premier pinkie-swore that there would be no new costs. He pinkie-swore and then he gave us the finger. I'm going to ask you again, Minister, why did you break your promise?

Hon Mr Leach: I'll refer this question to the Minister of Finance.

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): The leader of the official opposition will be more than aware that when this government assumed office, the province was spending \$1.16 million an hour more than it was taking in in revenue. We had a deficit of \$11 billion. We understood, the people of Ontario understood and I believe Ontario municipalities understood that we all collectively had a serious problem.

We have done something about the serious problem. We asked the municipal partners to share with us part of the cost reduction. The Minister of Municipal Affairs told municipalities that two years ago. Terry Mundell, AMO president, said on May 1 of this year, "The reality of the situation is —"

Interjections.

The Speaker: Member for Hamilton East, please come to order. Ottawa Centre also. Member for Halton Centre, will you come to order too, please? I don't want to have to throw you out.

Hon Mr Eves: "The reality of the situation is that the province told us about a year ago that the \$667 million in municipal support grant money was being eliminated. That is the difference in the tradeoff." That is exactly the way the circumstances are. I couldn't have said it better myself. We have always said that up front.

The reality is that with respect to the Who Does What exercise, irrespective of the municipal support grant over here, which Mr Mundell, the treasurer of AMO, admits is the difference in the tradeoff, it is revenue-neutral. In fact, it's \$160 million to the betterment of municipalities, in Who Does What alone. As a result of the Who Does What exercise, the areas of joint or shared services have now been reduced from 12 to three in the province of Ontario.

Mr McGuinty: No matter how this minister slices it or dices it or cuts it, the fact of the matter is, this government left a very clear impression with the people of this province that this exercise would be revenue-neutral. Clearly it is not.

If you don't believe me, then listen to what some of your friends are saying. Here's what Markham Mayor Don Cousens, the esteemed former Conservative member in this Legislature, said: "There's a crime going on here. If you did this in the private sector, you'd be jailed for thievery." Some of what Toronto mayor-elect Mel Lastman said of course I cannot repeat in this Legislature because that kind of brutal honesty is not permitted in here, so I'll just say what I can say. He said: "You screwed Toronto, Mr Premier. You're cutting the heart out of the city."

That's what your friends are saying. That's what the people of the province are saying. I am going to ask you, Deputy Premier, why are you breaking your promise? Why are you increasing property taxes in Ontario?

Hon Mr Eves: We are not increasing property taxes in the province of Ontario.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. You must withdraw that, member for Lake Nipigon.

Mr Gilles Pouliot (Lake Nipigon): I believe in what Mr Lastman said, but I will withdraw.

The Speaker: No, no. I just want to hear a withdrawal.

Mr Pouliot: Withdraw, Speaker.

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon Mr Eves: The leader of the official opposition is reading selectively from different quotes. We could do the same thing. We could spend the rest of the day doing that if you prefer to do that.

Interjection.

Hon Mr Eves: "Find some," I heard the member sitting behind him say.

We're "in good shape," says the Peel treasurer.

"This doesn't put us in too bad of a position.... We've always been concerned about whether it would be revenue-neutral, and it looks like it...is." That's the region of York chair.

The city manager for the city of Owen Sound: "The province obviously has been listening. It's a big move in the right direction."

We could have done what his federal cousins in Ottawa did. We could have downloaded on provinces 37.7% and cut our own spending by 3.5%, like his country cousins in Ottawa did. What we did instead was we cut our own expenditures by 30% and we're asking municipalities to find a cost savings of 1.7%, 3.2% or 4.2%, depending on the size of the municipality. We could have cut 5% to 6% of their spending like the province of Quebec did, but we did not do that. We have been up front, totally honest —

The Speaker: Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr McGuinty: You're going to have a hard time with this one from here until the election. You can say it until you're blue in the face but nobody is going to buy it. The fact of the matter is, you told us that you wouldn't increase property taxes, and that's exactly what you're about to do: increase them by \$590 million.

This shouldn't come as a surprise. This is one broken promise in a litany of broken promises. This is the government that said they wouldn't close any hospitals; they're about to close more than 30. This is the government that said they wouldn't take any money out of our classrooms, and they broke that promise; they're going to take out about \$1.2 billion when all is said and done. They said that they would not introduce any user fees and surely they would never, ever attack our seniors. We've got \$225 million in new drug user fees for our seniors. Then there was the mother of all promises: The Premier himself would resign if he broke any promise along the way.

Given that history that you have so carefully cultivated along the way, how can you expect us to believe you today when you say that this is a revenue-neutral exercise and that you're not about to increase property taxes?

Hon Mr Eves: To the leader of the official opposition, first of all, the Who Does What exercise is revenue-

neutral, period. Second of all, if he's talking about the elimination of the municipal support grants, that announcement was made two years ago. He's had two years to bring himself up to speed on that. This is coming out of the mouth of a member of David Peterson's cabinet, which hiked taxes 33 times, which introduced the commercial concentration tax to penalize the greater Metropolitan Toronto area, which increased an employer health tax to literally lay off thousands of employees across the province of Ontario. I know you find it difficult, coming from that background, to believe that a provincial government would not —

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Member for Hamilton East, I'm not warning you again. I'm going to name you next time. I ask the members to come to order. I can't hear the minister. It's very unruly. Minister of Finance.

Hon Mr Eves: I've completed my remarks, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: New question, leader of the third party.

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs. We need to get to the bottom of these numbers. Last August, your Premier went to the Association of Municipalities of Ontario and said he would guarantee that the downloading exercise would be revenue-neutral. In fact he said, in reference to his young son, that he would pinkie-swear that it would be revenue-neutral.

Minister, municipalities woke up on Friday morning to discover that they're \$590 million in the hole thanks to your government, that you've taken away \$590 million from them. Can you tell us now why the Premier broke his promise that he would not be downloading on municipalities, that he would not be cutting them?

1450

Hon Mr Leach: I can tell you the Premier of this province made that commitment and he has kept that commitment. That's another promise kept. The Who Does What exercise is revenue-neutral. We continue to show that it's revenue-neutral. The \$590 million that the member of the third party refers to is the elimination of the municipal support grant. As a matter of fact, as was pointed out just a few moments ago by the Treasurer, the municipalities actually end up \$160 million to the good when you've considered both sides of the equation. The Premier committed to AMO last August that this would be revenue-neutral from a Who Does What standpoint, and he has kept that promise.

Mr Hampton: People across this province are not stupid, despite what this government may think.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Order. Minister, I ask you to withdraw. That's unparliamentary.

Hon Mr Leach: I withdraw.

Mr Hampton: Toronto knows it is out —

Interjection.

The Speaker: Did you say that, member for Brantford? I want to hear that withdrawn too.

Mr Ron Johnson (Brantford): I withdraw.

Mr Hampton: Toronto knows it's out \$163 million; London knows it's out \$13.9 million; Waterloo knows it's out \$9.6 million; Mississauga knows it's out \$7.5 million; Hamilton, \$6.8 million; Sault Ste Marie, \$2 million. They know these figures. Furthermore, the leadership in these communities know that they're out money. Do I have to repeat the headline in the Toronto Star, "Lastman Labels Harris 'A Liar'"? That's what it says.

The Speaker: No, you can't infer what you can't do directly. You can't do that, I say to the member.

Mr Hampton: Speaker, I will not refer to the Toronto Star headline. I drop any reference to the Toronto Star headline.

Then there's the Globe and Mail headline; it says the same thing.

Minister, everybody around this province knows that you have put the screws to municipalities to the tune of \$590 million a year and that amount is going to grow in the out years. Why did you break your promise? Why did you take that amount of money from municipalities and force them to either cut services or raise property taxes? Why did you do it?

Hon Mr Leach: I'll repeat again for the member of the third party, who obviously fails to understand what's happening: We told the municipalities at the AMO conference, both in 1995 and 1996 — I told them up in Thunder Bay in the spring of 1996 — that the municipal support grant would be eliminated. That municipal support grant is \$667 million remaining this year and it will be gone. That's the difference. The Who Does What trades across the province are revenue-neutral. That's a promise that was made, a commitment that was made by the Premier of this province and it was a commitment that was kept.

The Speaker: Final supplementary, the member for Dovercourt.

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): Minister, you seem to now be conveniently forgetting what you told us so many times, and your Premier told us before, which is that there is only one taxpayer. Whether it's the category of the \$590 million or the rest of the download, it's the same property taxpayer who is going to get hit. In the city of Toronto, you know that hit comes to the tune of \$163 million, to the point that even members of your own hand-picked transition team — Paul Sutherland in this case — said you've thrown their whole budget process into chaos.

Minister, which is it? Is Paul Sutherland right or has he somehow missed this whole boat, just like you have, in terms of saying that this is now going to be revenue-neutral? He's saying \$163 million in the hole is what it's going to mean for Toronto. Is he right or are you right in this?

Hon Mr Leach: I have met with Mr Sutherland and I think he fully understands what's happening here. I also discussed this morning with the incoming budget chairman to tell him that, as a result of the amalgamation, we know the city of Toronto is going to have some unique financing situations to deal with in 1998, because the millions of dollars in savings that will accumulate as a result of

amalgamation obviously can't be found in the first year but will be found in the second and third years.

As a result, we have offered to the city of Toronto to bridge-finance that shortfall in 1998 and have it repaid to the other taxpayers in Ontario when the hundreds of millions of dollars of savings are found in 1999 and the year 2000. Nothing could be fairer than that. We know that Toronto is the economic engine of Ontario. We want it to work. The policies that we put in will ensure that it will work.

The Speaker: New question, leader of the third party.

Mr Hampton: To the Minister of Municipal Affairs again: There's an interesting report from the mayor of Pickering, Mr Wayne Arthurs, who says that he is very concerned about how much his community is losing. He says that what he is going to do is withhold the amount of money that has been downloaded from any money they send to you. In other words, any money you ask for from that municipality in the way of education taxes or property taxes, he's going to withhold whatever amount of money you've downloaded. Can you tell us what you're going to do if Mr Arthurs in Pickering and other communities decide to withhold the amount of money you have downloaded? Can you tell us what you're going to do?

Hon Mr Leach: I would suggest that the mayor of that particular community might want to think twice about doing that because it would be against the law. I think all of our duly elected municipal representatives are quite responsible and I don't think they would take actions that would have them breaking the laws of Ontario. I'm quite confident that when they have an opportunity to sit back and look —

Interjection.

The Speaker: That's out of order.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): It wasn't when you were here. You did it.

The Speaker: It was out of order then too.

Hon Mr Leach: Again, I'm quite confident that when our municipal leaders have an opportunity to sit back, review the numbers in detail and see that the Who Does What program is revenue-neutral and the effect of the other changes is a result of the elimination of the municipal support grant that we told them two years ago was going to happen, they will be more than pleased to work cooperatively with us in the province.

1500

Mr Hampton: This gets more interesting. It's okay for your government to take \$590 million out of the pockets of Ontario municipalities, it's okay for you to take \$163 million out of Toronto, it's okay for you to take \$4.8 million out of Chatham-Kent, it's okay for you to take over \$1 million out of my home community, a small town like Fort Frances, but if they try to settle up with you, if they say, "No, we're not going to send these property taxes to you," then that's against the law.

Minister, if this is truly revenue-neutral, how is it that those municipalities feel so pressed that they have to consider withholding revenue from you? How can that happen if this is revenue-neutral?

Hon Mr Leach: Other than repeat what has been said many times already this afternoon, that the Who Does What trades are revenue-neutral — it's the loss of the municipal support grant that the member of the third party is referring to. We advised municipalities several years ago that that support grant would disappear over the next two or three years. This is the final year for that support grant. It will not exist in 1998. That's what the member is referring to.

As far as the Who Does What trades are concerned, they are revenue-neutral. The Premier committed it would be revenue-neutral. I committed it would be revenue-neutral. It is revenue-neutral right across the province.

Mr Hampton: I don't think we've ever had a situation this unbelievable in this Legislature. Municipalities have just had their pockets picked to the tune of \$590 million a year and the government stands up and says, "It's revenue-neutral." It would be funny if it were not so pathetic. It would be funny except for the fact that municipalities are now going to be put in the position where they have to choose: Do they cut policing or do they cut firefighting? Do they cut ambulance services or do they cut public health? Do they pick on kids and cut child care? Those are the kinds of ugly choices your government is establishing by this cynical move. You've taken \$590 million out of the pockets of municipalities. You're going to put them in that position, where they have to make those choices or they have to raise property taxes.

Minister, what would you suggest? Should they cut policing or should they cut firefighting? Should they cut ambulance services or should they cut public health? Should they cut child care? Should they raise property taxes? Which is it, Minister?

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Chief government whip, Minister of Community and Social Services, I'm not going to warn you again.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Well, chief government whip, maybe I'm being a little reactionary. Okay, but Minister of Community and Social Services, I'm not going to warn you again.

Hon Mr Leach: To the leader of the third party: There are some tough choices that have to be made. This province has had to make tough choices and the municipalities are going to have to make tough choices, but none of it would be necessary if we had had any kind of responsible government in the past five years.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order, Scarborough, Lambton, Ottawa-Rideau.

Hon Mr Leach: I think it's absolutely amazing that the leader of the third party, a party that left this province with an \$11-billion deficit, with \$9 billion in interest payments, would have the audacity to ask why these tough decisions have to be made. It is amazing. You should be ashamed of yourself.

Mr Hampton: What about the \$5-billion tax gift, Al? Are your friends in Rosedale happy about that?

The Speaker: I'm not going to warn the leader of the third party again. Come to order.

Hon Mr Leach: This party over here should be ashamed of themselves. They're the party that put this province almost in ruin instead of making some very difficult decisions to get it back on track. We are getting it back on track, and they are tough decisions that have to be made, both by ourselves and by the municipalities.

The Speaker: New question, the member for Kingston and the Islands.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Nobody believes you that the downloading is neutral. Let me just remind you of something Mr Harris said when he met with the big-city mayors in August of this year. He said: "There's no hidden agenda here. We're not trying to squeeze another nickel off the property taxpayer."

It's very interesting. You released these documents under the darkness of night last Thursday night; yes, it shows there is absolutely no change as far as all the downloading is concerned until you start examining the document. Let me remind you, Minister, it takes into account the loss of municipal support grants. You then have added, on top of that, savings to each municipality, which collectively add up to the \$565 million we're talking about.

Will you now agree with me that there was a hidden agenda, that what you've been saying all along, that it would be revenue-neutral — that in fact it wasn't revenue-neutral, that you always expected municipalities to come up with another 3% or 4% in savings, which just happens to be the \$565 million —

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon Mr Leach: I'll refer the question to the Minister of Finance.

Hon Mr Eves: We have said up front, and the Minister of Municipal Affairs himself said in 1995, that the municipal support grant would be eliminated, would be phased out over the next three years. Everybody understood that; everybody knew that. The treasurer of AMO knows that; he's on record as saying that.

The Who Does What exercise itself is indeed revenue-neutral; in fact municipalities have a \$160-million benefit out of the Who Does What exercise. But to be quite frank, in outlining costs — all costs, not just the Who Does What exercise, the municipal support grant as well — when we put that on a sheet of paper, obviously to replace the municipal support grant itself, nothing to do with the Who Does What exercise, municipalities depending on their size and their taxability will have to find savings of 1.7%, 3.2% or 4.2%. If they do that one time, not like 5% or 6% that Quebec is asking them to do, not like 37.7% that your federal cousins in Ottawa are asking provinces to do —

The Speaker: Supplementary, member for Kingston and The Islands.

Mr Gerretsen: Minister, it's not a one-time cut. This is permanently built into the budgets of the municipalities. There are two figures that you're referring to in these

statements. One is the loss of municipal support grant and the other is what you call savings, which in effect are further cuts that the municipalities have to make. But not only are you not honest with the people of Ontario in the savings that you make —

Interjections.

The Speaker: Withdraw.

Mr Gerretsen: I withdraw, Mr Speaker.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Stop the clock.

Member for Kingston and The Islands.

1510

Mr Gerretsen: You're also incompetent. You've already heard from my friend from Essex-Kent that Pelee Island, an island of 200 individuals, has been allocated \$2.2 million in education tax. The Frontenac Islands community, which pays a total of \$700,000 in taxes, has been allocated \$3.7 million in education taxes. The parliamentary assistant for Municipal Affairs and Housing agreed with me on Thursday night that these figures are wrong.

When are you going to get it right? You've had it wrong three times now. When are you going to give the municipalities the real cost of all this downloading that you're doing?

Hon Mr Eves: First of all, there is no downloading to municipalities through this exercise. Municipalities were told in 1995 that municipal support grants would be eliminated. They have accommodated that very well in the first two years and this will be the third year of that exercise. With your background in municipal politics, you know very well what the size of that fund was two years ago.

Mr Mundell, the treasurer of AMO, is on record as saying that he was more than aware on May 2 of this year that that was being eliminated. So was every other municipality. All municipalities in the province of Ontario were aware the municipal support grant was going to end. The Who Does What exercise is indeed revenue-neutral. He talks about various sets of figures. Figures have been given to municipalities as assessment data are upgraded as the province is being reassessed. It is currently now almost 100% reassessed and the information —

The Speaker: Thank you. New question. Third party, the member for Riverdale.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): I have a question for the Deputy Premier. "Preventing violence against women is everybody's responsibility." I hope the Deputy Premier is familiar with this statement because it is a direct quote from a publication of your government, entitled Prevention of Violence Against Women.

This statement was quoted back to you by the Provincial Council of Women of Ontario in a letter to the Premier dated December 10. The Provincial Council of Women of Ontario is outraged at the behaviour of your government members who chose the occasion of my seeking unanimous consent to recognize Wife Assault

Prevention Month to laugh and heckle. Some of the council members were in your galleries in fact that day and heard some of the heckling.

Deputy Premier, I ask you: What are you and your Premier going to do to bring the members of your government up to speed on the reality of spousal abuse?

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): Mr Speaker, I was not present in the chamber the day the member is speaking of. If the facts as she described them are accurate, I too would be concerned about the reaction of certain members of the Legislative Assembly, regardless of what side of the House they sat on, in a matter as serious as that.

She will know that in our most recent budget, in May of this year, I allotted millions of dollars more to the minister responsible for women's issues for initiatives just such as the one she speaks of.

Ms Churley: I thank the Deputy Premier for that answer, although I have to remind him that overall your government has cut across the board to all of the agencies that are dealing with spousal abuse and violence against women, but that's not what this question is about.

I am pleased to hear that you take my comments seriously, but you know, I was aware that day of some inappropriate comments as well and I think now we have to take this very seriously. Listen to what the council wrote to the Premier. It is a quote:

"Wife assault is nothing to be laughed at. The action of your government, while demeaning and hurtful to all women in Ontario, was destructive and demoralizing to all Ontario women who have been victims of and/or are currently suffering at the hands of a male partner. The battle against wife/partner assault is not being won."

Deputy Premier, there is much still to be done about putting an end to violence against women. I would say it starts with attitude and treating women with respect and it should start with government members from your own caucus. I am wondering if you would commit today to having some kind of education program for certain members within your government caucus to teach them about the seriousness of this issue.

Hon Mr Eves: I can tell the honourable member that members on this side of the House do indeed take the issue of which she speaks quite seriously. The Attorney General of the province of Ontario about two weeks ago announced the opening of two courts to deal with domestic violence. I'm sure she's aware of those initiatives. The Solicitor General of the province of Ontario has three different programs that he is instituting, including a program with respect to male batterers. There's also another program reviewing sexual assault that he is dealing with.

As I said, my colleague the minister responsible for women's issues was given millions of dollars in the last budget, and we'll look at these things on an ongoing basis as this year's budgetary process is about to start next month, look at upgrading them.

I can tell the honourable member quite sincerely, I was the Minister of Community and Social Services in this province when the very first transition homes for battered

women were put in place. I initiated and agreed to the first eight pilot projects in the province. I certainly understand the seriousness of this issue and I can assure you that every member of this government does as well.

RETRAINING FUNDS

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke-Rexdale): My question is directed to the Minister of Education and Training. For some time now, Ottawa and Ontario have been negotiating an agreement on training and development for skills in our future economy, and I would like to know if you could bring to the attention of this House the status of those negotiations and Ontario's objectives in dealing with this whole situation.

Hon David Johnson (Minister of Education and Training): The member is correct that there have been discussions with the federal government around the job training responsibilities vis-à-vis the federal responsibilities and the provincial responsibilities. In terms of my objectives and the government's objectives, we want the end result to address the skill shortages that are present today. We want the services, as a result of these discussions, to be better, to be less confusing, for the accessibility to be better for the unemployed, and we want to reduce the overlap and duplication between the federal and provincial programs.

A concern to me and I'm sure to all members of this House is that Ontario has about 39% of the labour force and about 36% of the unemployment, but apparently we are being offered only 30% of the employment insurance funding. What I want to see is a fairness for Ontario, a fairness for the unemployed in Ontario, to ensure they have the same accessibility as people in other provinces.

Mr Hastings: Given that the negotiations to some extent seem to be protracted and that fairness is a major objective we want to achieve, what kind of time frame do you give these negotiations in hoping to have a positive conclusion arrived at?

Hon David Johnson: I will assure the member that the previous Minister of Education, back in September, sent a letter to the federal minister to move the proceedings along. I personally have discussed this matter fairly recently with Minister Pettigrew. My staff is attempting to set up a meeting at the earliest opportunity with Minister Pettigrew. I have two objectives for that meeting. One is to speed up the process, and the other, again, is to ensure that the unemployed in Ontario, the people of Ontario, have access to the same funding as the unemployed in other provinces and that the access is improved for the unemployed in Ontario.

1520

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): My question is to the Minister of Finance. It has to do with property taxes on businesses as a result of the announcement on Friday. As part of the quite chaotic Friday an-

nouncement on downloading, we understand that the province has made a decision on how it plans to put education costs on business property taxes in 1998. We understand that the province intends to not have a province-wide tax rate on business, but rather, will say to municipalities, "We want the same money from your businesses in 1998 as was raised in 1997."

My question is this: Can you explain to our business community the rationale for why residential rates are the same across the province regardless of where you live, but business rates will change depending on where your business is?

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): I can tell you that no final decision on this has been made. There are several options the government is still considering. But I think in his question he points out some of the inequities in the current tax system; the inequities and the unfairness of commercial taxes, for example, in the city of Toronto versus outlying areas in the GTA area. That is why we have taken several measures, including allowing municipalities the latitude to have up to three different rates, for example, for commercial property.

I'm not going to stand here and say that's going to totally solve the problem because he and I both know it is not. But we want to move towards tax fairness and tax equity with respect to commercial properties in a more fair and equitable manner, but at the same time when we're making this decision — and it hasn't been made yet in its final form I impress upon him — we have to appreciate what impact on particular municipalities it's going to have. Hence, we talked about establishing ranges of fairness that municipalities couldn't deviate from.

Mr Phillips: This is part of the chaos, Minister, with all due respect. You last week announced a total reshuffling of municipalities; the new city of Toronto, \$163 million. Surely you're not telling us that there's a plan for another reshuffle in a few days. Surely any sensible businessperson would have announced the total business plan. This is chaotic for the business community. I think you've given yourself only one choice. You have no other choice. If you don't think you've made the decision, I tell you you have made the decision because you have essentially built the box around which this will work.

My question is still the same. The Metro Board of Trade said any geographic variation in tax rates should be considered an intolerable offence to the principle of fairness. You've now boxed yourself in to having that. Can you explain to the business owners once and for all in Ontario why it is that you are planning to have a different educational tax rate depending on where your business is in Ontario?

Hon Mr Eves: We have not said that.

Mr Phillips: You have.

Hon Mr Eves: I have not said that. The member for Scarborough-Agincourt is indicating what he presumes the government will decide. I told you just a few moments ago, in response to your initial question, that we are going to be moving towards some degree of fairness and equity

and we are going to be doing as many things as we can with respect to the commercial property and industrial property base in the province. However, we have not said that we are going to have different rates in every single municipality. I suggest to the honourable member that he wait until the decision is made.

I might remind him that his government sat there, did absolutely nothing with this entire issue about reassessment, although they knew — I know that his Treasurer, Mr Robert Nixon, indicated on several occasions that was the direction he'd like to go in. There might have been some very difficult decisions around the cabinet table. I can certainly relate to that surrounding this issue, but we are going to —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you. New question.

CASINOS

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): A question to the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations: For a year now, I and my caucus have been asking your government to listen to local communities. Today, the members of the Ontario Coalition Against Gambling Expansion are here, Minister, asking you and your government to listen to local community opposition against expanding casinos. They're very concerned because despite the fact that communities across this province voted against casinos, you seem to be intent on steamrolling ahead. Despite the fact that you have virtually no protections against the infiltration of organized crime, you seem to be steamrolling ahead. Despite the fact that your own policy before the election was to hold a referendum before there was any expansion of casinos, you want to steamroll ahead. Minister, I'm going to ask you on behalf of the Ontario coalition —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Question.

Mr Hampton: — will you stop this steamroller until the municipal councils have had a chance to look at the issue, stop until the new municipal councils have had a chance —

The Speaker: Thank you. Minister.

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations): The member for St Catharines has been a lot more tenacious on this issue because we've been discussing this over the last week almost every day and I guess I could refer to any one of December 8, 9 or 10 etc to answer the question, but I'll treat it anew and afresh.

We've clearly said we wouldn't force any community to take any charity gaming clubs. That's very clear. Second, and we've said this all along and we've been very consistent, we said: "Look, they're not our referenda, they weren't our plebiscites. They were ordered by the municipal councils. Surely to goodness, the municipal councils are the ones we are going to be communicating with."

The member referred to organized crime. He will probably remember there was a report from the police with respect to the shortcomings in the gaming area. The

report actually was dealing with the period before 1995; his government was in power at that time. They dealt with a number of issues including the bingos and the break-open tickets, and they said the worst was the roving casinos.

Under the new system there will be some accountabilities for a change. We'll have more than six police officers officiating over 4,500 events and 15,000 days.

The Speaker: Supplementary, the member for Sault Ste Marie.

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): The Coopers and Lybrand you had carried out said very clearly that the smaller mini-casinos are not like the big commercial ones and that they present particular challenges, but you haven't put any safeguards in place. The coalition that's here today, people from London, Barrie, Hamilton, Belleville, Kingston, Gananoque, Toronto all state that your gambling strategy is a wolf in sheep's clothing. We need to know more about the exposure to crime, about problem gambling and about the impact of these mini-casinos on local economies. Will you at least conduct an impact study and do it before you proceed so we know what the social and economic repercussions are before you do it so that communities know what they're dealing with?

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: I think I should remind the member for Sault Ste Marie about the situation when their government introduced commercial casinos into the province. The then minister in charge of it, Frances Lankin, indicated a number of things. First of all, she indicated that the casinos would be an economic catalyst and said it was very positive. She said, "It is understandable that a number of communities in Ontario have expressed an interest in hosting a casino."

Then she went on, and this is a statement to the Legislature on November 3, 1994:

"Prior to the casino's arrival, a number of concerns were expressed about issues such as increased crime, traffic congestion and noise. The study I'm releasing today finds that these problems have not materialized.... Given the results that I have outlined today, it is understandable that a number of communities in Ontario have expressed an interest in hosting a casino in their community."

They certainly had a lot of enthusiasm for gaming in their day as government.

IMMIGRANT SPONSORSHIP

Mr David Tilson (Dufferin-Peel): I have a question for the Minister of Community and Social Services. The serious problem we have in the region of Peel is the tremendous cost of the increasing number of immigrants who are forced on to welfare because their supporters are not fulfilling their obligation to support them. The federal government in Ottawa has agreements with sponsors stating that for 10 years sponsors of these immigrants will financially assist them. These agreements are not being honoured by their sponsors or enforced by the federal government. The federal government is not doing its job.

My question to the minister is, what is she doing to make sure this situation changes?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Community and Social Services): At a time when the finance minister earlier today talked about how the province is still spending over \$600,000 an hour more than we're taking in, any fault in the sponsorship program that Ottawa runs — it's costing us as high as \$300 million a year in failed sponsorships, so this is an extremely significant negative impact on Ontario's ability to pay for many of those social programs that we consider so important.

Peel has been fighting very hard and lobbying Ottawa on this. We had hoped they would tighten up the regulations in terms of sponsorship. They said they were going to but unfortunately, while they did make some improvements, they have allowed, for example, that if someone is currently on social assistance they're still allowed to sponsor, even though their ability to say they're going to be financially responsible for that person for 10 years is extremely open to question. Second, they also continue to permit individuals to sponsor even after they've previously defaulted. We do think there needs to be much tighter regulation to prevent failed sponsorships.

Mr Tilson: Half of Canada's new immigrants end up living in southern Ontario, and more and more are coming to Peel region because of job opportunities and affordable housing. The federal government needs to pass tougher restrictions on those who can become a sponsor. The failure of these sponsors in the region of Peel and the rest of Ontario to honour their commitments with the government of Canada is an absolute disgrace. Can you tell me, Minister, the status of the Peel pilot project reviewing these matters and are you considering expanding this project province-wide?

Hon Mrs Ecker: Peel region had entered into a pilot project with Ottawa and the province to see what could be done to prevent sponsorships from breaking down or to get them restarted again. They have done a study. We've been anxiously awaiting the results of that study because they have found that there are certain interventions which worked very successfully. We understand that finally they're going to start going to court to try and enforce those sponsorship rules.

Whatever recommendations come out of that study, and we would encourage them to release it very quickly, we would like to take those recommendations and implement them province-wide. I think when those sponsorships break down, what Ottawa must recognize is that there are significant financial costs, financial impacts, not only on social assistance but also on our education and health budgets, and I believe they must recognize that.

1530

CASINOS

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a question for the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations. Today I attended the press conference of the Ontario Coalition Against Gambling Expansion. These

were people from communities across Ontario who were at the Legislature today to express their deep concern about the drastic expansion of gambling opportunities in Ontario, specifically the new Mike Harris gambling halls or, as you call them, charity casinos, 44 permanent casinos that could operate seven days a week, 24 hours a day and prey upon the vulnerable, the desperate and the addicted in their communities.

These people fear that you will ignore the results of referendums and plebiscites that were held during the recent municipal elections and try to bribe and intimidate municipal councils into disregarding their electors. Former Conservative cabinet minister Jack McNie, a member of the Davis cabinet, expressed this fear. He said, "The fix is in."

Minister, will you promise today that in municipalities that voted against charity casinos you will respect the will of the electorate and not allow charity casinos in those communities? I'm talking about the vote.

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations): It almost feels like it's Pete and Repeat today; all these questions. I must say, though, to his credit, the member for St Catharines is usually first off the mark with his questions.

Once again, if I could reference December 8, 9 or 10 or whatever you want, we've been consistent in saying that clearly any of the plebiscites, any of the referenda in the various forms that the various municipalities have held during the last municipal election were really asked for by themselves and information to them.

We've clearly said we would not force any community to take a charity gaming club, which is how I refer to them, by the way, in a community that did ask for them. We've been consistent with that message.

Mr Bradley: The minister has not answered the questions. He's been congratulated by his staff who saw him on Global TV giving the same answer. They say: "Isn't this smart? You've given the same answer. You're not budging from it."

The question I am asking is not whether you're going to bribe the municipal councillors with VLT administration funds or whether you're going to intimidate them by having charities call them up and say they want these casinos. What I'm asking you is this: In those communities where there was a vote that took place on the charity casinos and the people by a vote, a referendum or a plebiscite, said they did not want them, will you, as Jack McNie, former Conservative cabinet minister in the Davis government asked, respect that particular view and not allow your charity casinos, the new Mike Harris gambling halls, to go into those municipalities which voted against them? That's the question, and that's the question that you have not answered for two weeks.

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: I guess there's quite a difference of opinion on this. Clearly, if I could repeat myself again, we said we would not force any community that did not want one to take a charity gaming club.

Perhaps I can indicate another side of this. This is an article that was in the Peterborough Examiner recently. It

was a quote by Linda Gratton, the interim executive director of the Elizabeth Fry Society, who indicated: "We saw this" — being the charity gaming clubs — "as a positive, having more control over casino operations than video lottery terminals, with the community getting annual revenues from the terminals."

I think this is about supporting the charities in our community. It's about putting accountability into a system that did not have it before.

PETITIONS

RÉFORME DU SYSTÈME D'ÉDUCATION

M. Jean-Marc Lalonde (Prescott et Russell) : «À l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario :

«Attendu que nous, les signataires de cette pétition, voulons signifier au gouvernement notre opposition au projet de loi 160 ;

«Attendu que le projet de loi 160 exclut les parents et les enseignants du processus de décision dans le secteur de l'éducation en Ontario ;

«Attendu que le projet de loi 160 centralise tous les pouvoirs entre les mains du gouvernement ;

«Attendu que le projet de loi 160 accorde au gouvernement Harris le pouvoir de retrancher 660 \$ millions de plus du secteur de l'éducation ;

«Nous, les soussignataires, demandons le retrait du projet de loi 160.» J'y ajoute ma signature.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I have further petitions signed by thousands of workers with regard to the Workers' Health and Safety Centre and clinics.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas approximately 300 workers are killed on the job each year and 400,000 suffer work-related injuries and illnesses; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario continues to allow a massive erosion of WCB prevention funding; and

"Whereas Ontario workers are fearful that the government of Ontario, through its recent initiatives, is threatening to dismantle workers' clinics and the Workers' Health and Safety Centre; and

"Whereas the workers' clinics and the Workers' Health and Safety Centre have consistently provided a meaningful role for labour within the health and safety prevention system; and

"Whereas the workers' clinics and the Workers' Health and Safety Centre have proven to be the most cost-effective prevention organizations funded by the WCB;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately cease the assault on the workers' clinics and the Workers' Health and Safety Centre; and

"Further we, the undersigned, call upon the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to ensure that the workers' clinics and the Workers' Health and Safety Centre remain labour-driven organizations with full and equitable WCB funding and that the WCB provide adequate prevention funding to eliminate workplace illness and injury."

On behalf of my NDP colleagues, I proudly add my name to those of these petitioners.

LANDFILL

The Deputy Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Further petitions? The member for Durham East.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): Thank you, Madam Speaker, for the kind recognition.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas in October 1996, fill was placed at 3242 Salina Road, Clarington. The owner of this property failed to apply for a permit prior to receiving the fill, as was required by the Central Lake Ontario Conservation Authority. The site was rezoned to receive clean fill only, yet the owner received fill which was clearly undesignated industrial fill;

"Whereas the owner of this property is an employee of the Durham regional works recycling centre at 4600 Gerrard Road in Whitby and should have been aware that a permit would have been required and that his zoning allowed him to receive clean fill only;

"Whereas CLOCA was made aware in October 1996 of the industrial-commercial fill being deposited on the site. CLOCA was made aware that a road was being constructed right up to the banks of a coldstream creek on the property and that the fill was being redistributed on the property, yet did not pursue the matter until formally requested to do so in January 1997;

"Whereas the municipality of Clarington was asked to investigate this matter, as a number of residents were concerned that the groundwater and therefore the drinking water would be contaminated;

"Whereas the husband of the municipal planner involved in the investigation of this matter on behalf of the municipality of Clarington is employed by the regional municipality of Durham, at the same facility as the owner of the Salina Road site, as manager of the regional works traffic control, the municipal planner appears to have a conflict and the municipality's and the residents' best interests may not have been paramount in this matter;

"Whereas any fill on the Salina site should have met July 1996 guidelines for allowable levels of contamination, it is evident from test data that lead levels in the soil exceeded acceptable levels according to these guidelines. The soil contains many acute hazardous-waste chemical hazards, waste chemicals and leachate. This is dangerous to humans as well as plant and fish habitat;

"Whereas this fill has now been redistributed and the owner of the 3242 Salina Road site intends to grow crops on the property;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that independent MOEE investigators

receive the data, assess the problem and suggest solutions that will safeguard the groundwater sources and protect the residents from the negative impacts of soil and water contamination. The site-specific risk assessment approach, SSRA, or Ontario regulation 347, should be applied to this site to assess health risks posed to humans and the environment, and suggest Mr R. Shaw, regional director."

1540

EDUCATION REFORM

Mr Alex Cullen (Ottawa West): I'm continuing to receive thousands of petitions with respect to Bill 160. This petition says:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario government wants to take an additional \$1 billion out of the education system this year and every year; and

"Whereas the Ontario government will remove up to 10,000 teachers from classrooms across the province; and

"Whereas the Ontario government will have unbridled regulatory powers over public education; and

"Whereas the Ontario government wishes to remove the right to negotiate student learning conditions; and

"Whereas the Ontario government proposes to undermine shared decision-making among students, parents, educators, trustees and taxpayers;

"We, the undersigned Ontario residents, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to withdraw Bill 160."

This is signed by residents in my own riding and I affix my signature to it.

CHIROPRACTIC HEALTH CARE

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I have a petition addressed to the members of the Ontario Legislature:

"Whereas the Ministry of Health has recently strengthened its reputation as the Ministry of Medicine through its \$1.7-billion three-year agreement with the Ontario Medical Association; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government is restricting access to alternative cost-saving treatments for patients of the province; and

"Whereas two recent reports commissioned by the Ministry of Health called for increased OHIP funding to improve patient access to chiropractic services on the grounds of safety, effectiveness and cost-effectiveness; and

"Whereas over one million Ontario adults now use chiropractic services annually, increasingly those with higher incomes, because of the cost barrier caused by government underfunding; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government has shown blatant disregard for the needs of the citizens of Ontario in restricting funding for chiropractic services;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to recognize the contribution made by chiropractors to the good health of the people of Ontario, to recognize the taxpayer dollars saved by the use of low-

cost preventive care such as that provided by chiropractors and to recognize that to restrict funding for chiropractic health care only serves to limit access to a needed health care service."

This is signed by residents of Wawa, and I affix my signature thereto.

PAY EQUITY

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): I have a petition signed by many people from my riding. It's to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas under the current Pay Equity Act, Bill 136, the Canadian Red Cross homemaker service will be forced to cease operating January 1, 1998; and

"Whereas over 73,000 frail, elderly and disabled clients and more than 6,000 workers will be affected;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly to amend the Pay Equity Act, Bill 136, so that Red Cross homemakers can continue to provide quality service to their clients."

To that I will affix my signature.

CASINO GAMBLING

Mr Mike Colle (Oakwood): To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ernie Eves and Mike Harris were against casino gambling when they were in opposition and warned that more casinos equalled more crime, prostitution, drugs and higher police costs; and

"Whereas during the last election campaign Mike Harris and the Tories said they would not force casinos into communities across Ontario without the consent of the voters; and

"Whereas over 70% of the megacity voters in the recent municipal election voted a resounding No to the spread of casinos into their neighbourhoods; and

"Whereas the voters of the Toronto megacity have spoken loud and clear against casinos in all of Metro's six municipalities, with over 460,000 voters saying No to Mike Harris's gambling halls into neighbourhoods; and

"Whereas there is already too much gambling in Ontario, that preys upon the most vulnerable and desperate;

"Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the legislative Assembly that Mike Harris listen to those who voted overwhelmingly no to the spread of the Mike Harris gaming halls and stop the introduction of any further Mike Harris gambling halls in Metro Toronto by the Harris Tories."

I'll affix my name to this petition.

RÉFORME DU SYSTÈME D'ÉDUCATION

M. Gilles Bisson (Cochrane-Sud) : J'ai ici une pétition intitulée «Projet de loi 160,» et c'est écrite comme telle :

«Attendu que l'éducation de nos enfants nous est une priorité ;

«Attendu que nous trouvons que le système d'éducation public tel qu'il existe répond aux besoins du plus grand nombre d'élèves possible, y inclus ceux qui ont des besoins particuliers ;

«Attendu qu'avec les changements proposés par le ministre Snobelen dans le projet de loi 160, la possibilité d'action locale pour répondre à ces besoins est enlevée ;

«Attendu que ces changements vont affecter la salle de classe de façon négative et diminuera les ressources disponibles aux enseignantes et aux enseignants ;

«Il est résolu que le ministre Snobelen retire le projet de loi 160 et entame des discussions sérieuses avec tous les enseignants de la province» afin de retourner à un système équilibré.

Je signe cette pétition avec grosse fierté.

EDUCATION REFORM

Mr Toby Barrett (Norfolk): This petition reads as follows:

"Whereas the Ontario government wants to take up to an additional \$1 billion out of the education system this year and every year; and

"Whereas the Ontario government will remove up to 10,000 teachers from classrooms across the province; and

"Whereas the Ontario government will have unbridled regulatory powers over public education; and

"Whereas the Ontario government wishes to remove the right to negotiate student learning conditions; and

"Whereas the Ontario government proposes to undermine shared decision-making among students, parents, educators, trustees and taxpayers;

"We, the undersigned Ontario residents, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to withdraw Bill 160."

I've signed these petitions.

Mr Pat Hoy (Essex-Kent): I have a citizens' petition against Bill 160. It's signed by residents of Chatham, Wallaceburg, Thamesville and other areas in Kent.

"We, the undersigned citizens of Ontario, believe Bill 160 will not improve education. We are opposed to the Harris government passing legislation that would centralize all decision-making about education in the hands of the cabinet. This shift in control will enable cabinet to cut another \$700 million from education."

I've affixed my name to this petition.

Ms Marion Boyd (London Centre): I have a petition which reads as follows:

"Whereas the government of Ontario has not listened to the public on Bill 160; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario has chosen to overtly deceive the people of Ontario as to the true objectives of Bill 160; and

"Whereas we, the people, believe that no government has a mandate to act in isolation of the wishes of the electorate of this province and we have lost confidence in the government,

"We, the undersigned electors of Ontario, petition the Lieutenant Governor to dissolve the Legislature and call a general election forthwith."

BEAR HUNTING

Mr Tim Hudak (Niagara South): I have a petition from the good people of Port Colborne and from throughout the Niagara Peninsula. It's a petition to protect our right to hunt and to continue black bear hunting in Ontario, and it reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas black bear populations in Ontario are healthy with between 75,000 and 100,000 animals and their numbers are stable or increasing in many areas of the province; and

"Whereas black bear hunting is enjoyed by over 20,000 hunters annually in Ontario and black bears are a well-managed renewable resource; and

"Whereas hunting regulations are based on sustained yield principles and all forms of hunting are needed to optimize the socioeconomic benefits associated with hunting;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ontario government protect our hunting heritage and continue to support all current forms of black bear hunting."

In support, my signature.

CASINO GAMBLING

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas during the last election campaign Mike Harris and the Tories said they would not force casinos into communities across Ontario without the consent of the voters; and

"Whereas over 70% of Metro Toronto voters in the recent municipal election voted a resounding No to the spread of casinos into their neighbourhoods; and

"Whereas the voters of the Toronto megacity have spoken loudly and clear against casinos in all of Metro's six municipalities, with over 460,000 voters saying No to Mike Harris's spread of casinos into neighbourhoods; and

"Whereas there is already too much gambling in Ontario that preys upon the most vulnerable and desperate;

"Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly that Mike Harris listen to those who voted overwhelmingly no to the spread of casinos and stop the introduction of any further casinos in Metro."

I affix my signature, as I'm in agreement with this petition.

1550

EDUCATION FINANCING

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): I have yet again a number of petitions here from the community of Matheson, and they read as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario government wants to take up to an additional \$1 billion out of the education system this year and every year; and

"Whereas the Ontario government will remove up to 10,000 teachers from classrooms across the province; and

"Whereas the Ontario government will have unbridled regulatory powers over public education; and

"Whereas the Ontario government wishes to remove the right to negotiate student learning conditions; and

"Whereas the Ontario government proposes to undermine shared decision-making among students, parents, educators, trustees and taxpayers;

"We, the undersigned Ontario residents, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to withdraw Bill 160."

I signed that petition.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TIME ALLOCATION

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): I move that, pursuant to standing order 46 and notwithstanding any other standing order or special order of the House relating to Bill 164, An Act to implement job creation measures and other measures contained in the 1997 Budget and to make other amendments to statutes administered by the Ministry of Finance or relating to taxation matters, the standing committee on finance and economic affairs shall be authorized to meet at 7 pm on Monday, December 15, 1997 for the purpose of considering the bill;

That, at such time, the Chair shall put every question necessary to dispose of this stage of the bill without further debate or amendment;

That, the committee shall report the bill to the House not later than the first sessional day that reports from committees may be received following the completion of clause-by-clause consideration. In the event that the committee fails to report the bill on that day, the bill shall be deemed to be passed by the committee and shall be deemed to be reported to and received by the House;

That, upon receiving the report of the standing committee on finance and economic affairs, the Speaker shall put the question for adoption of the report forthwith, and at such time the bill shall be ordered for third reading;

That, on such day as the bill is reported, the order for third reading may be called;

That one sessional day shall be allotted to the third reading stage of the bill. At 5:45 pm or 9:15 pm as the case may be on such day, the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings and shall put every question necessary to dispose of this stage of the bill without further debate or amendment; and

That, in the case of any division relating to any proceedings on the bill, the division bell shall be limited to five minutes.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): On a point of order, Madam Speaker: You will know that I notified the Speaker previously that I would be raising a point of order on this matter. I attempted to raise it earlier and the Speaker informed me that he would hear my point at such time as the motion was called. So I advise on that point now. You have the submission. I will simply make a couple of points with respect to this motion which time allocates consideration of Bill 164.

As the Speaker has noted in this House, time allocation motions are becoming quite commonplace, but never have we in this assembly seen a time allocation motion like this one. I intend to argue that this time allocation is out of order.

Speaker, you will be aware that on Wednesday last, the House completed debate on second reading of Bill 164, and as is the right of members, as laid out in our standing orders under 71(c), 12 members stood in their places to refer this bill to the standing committee for consideration. The Minister of Finance directed the bill to the standing committee on finance and economic affairs. I had informed the government House leader previously on a number of occasions that our caucus wants public hearings on this massive piece of legislation.

The time allocation motion that the government House leader has called pulls this bill from the standing committee on finance and economic affairs without public hearings or even debate and opportunity for amendment. The committee is to meet tonight for approximately five minutes, it seems, simply to refer the bill back to the House for third reading. This House has directed the committee to meet and consider this piece of legislation — consider. Should this motion pass, the instructions of this House will not have been carried out. The motion stymies the ability of the House to make any amendment to the bill. It obstructs the bill from receiving consideration in committee, or for that matter in committee of the whole House, because under this time allocation motion it would be referred immediately to third reading.

I don't think I need to remind the members of the House that the government has the majority on the standing committee, so frankly, even from the government's standpoint, it isn't necessary to include this draconian measure of pulling the bill from the committee. The committee could consider the bill and pass a motion subsequent to consideration to report the bill to the House. The government, after all, has the majority on the committee.

With this time allocation motion, the government seeks not only to limit consideration of the bill in committee, but it actually would prohibit consideration of this important stage of a bill. In this case, the House has directed the standing committee on finance and economic affairs to consider Bill 164. This motion thwarts the wishes of the members of the Legislature who stood to refer the matter to committee and even the finance minister who referred the bill to the finance committee. If this motion is found to be in order, it means that members no longer have the right to stand in their places and refer bills to committee, because they'll simply be referred back to the House.

Where does this end? Will the government soon be able to time-allocate before second reading debate? Why not cancel consideration of all stages of the bill? Why should we even have this Legislature meet again? The government could just rule by decree.

Speaker, I want to bring to your attention a section of our standing orders that I believe gives us direction regarding the time allocation motion that has been raised here today. Standing order 1(b) lays out the purpose of our standing orders. It reads:

"The purpose of these standing orders is to ensure that proceedings are conducted in a manner that respects the democratic rights of members,

"(i) to submit motions, resolutions and bills for the consideration of the assembly and its committees, and to have them determined by democratic vote;

"(ii) to debate, speak to, and vote on motions, resolutions and bills" for the consideration of the assembly and its committees, and to have them determined by democratic vote;

"(iii) to hold the government accountable for its policies; and

"(iv) collectively, to decide matters submitted to the assembly or a committee."

I emphasize that the business is to be "conducted in a manner that respects the democratic rights of members." One of those rights under our standing orders is to refer bills to committee for consideration — for consideration, not to be given short shrift.

1600

Also, I cited standing order 1(b)(iii): The business of the House is to be conducted in a manner that enables the members "to hold the government accountable for its policies." I suggest that simply having a committee sit and move a motion immediately to refer a matter back to the House does not allow members of that committee to hold the government accountable for the measures it is taking in Bill 164.

This time allocation motion I believe is out of order and should not be allowed to proceed, because in my view it offends the purposes laid out in the standing orders. It does not respect the democratic rights of the members of the Legislative Assembly. It is our role, as elected representatives, to consider legislation, to debate, to scrutinize and to amend bills in this House and in committee. This time allocation motion has gone too far in curtailing the ability of the minority in the House to hold the government accountable.

It is your responsibility as Speaker of the Legislature to protect the rights of the minority and to uphold the purposes of our standing orders; not just the literal reading of the orders but the intent of the orders. I would ask you to rule on this time allocation motion as soon as possible, because the government has called it and I believe it to be out of order. I ask you to meet your grave responsibility to protect the rights of the minority in this assembly and on the committee.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I will be very brief in speaking to this matter. I happen to believe that

the government is moving in an extremely alarming fashion. I'm quite alarmed, as a member of this House and as a House leader, at the frequency and the nature — in this case we're talking about the nature — of the so-called time allocation motions or motions closing off debate that we are seeing from this government.

In this specific case, it is a known rule in this House, an accepted rule, that if 12 members of the Legislature rise, a matter is referred to a committee. That is not for the purpose of simply going through the motions. That is, in fact, for the committee to consider whichever matter has been referred to it, in this case Bill 164, in a fairly comprehensive fashion.

What the government has done is that it is, with its 82-seat majority, going to railroad through this motion this afternoon, and then this evening the legislative committee it has been assigned to will be dealing with it for a very short time. Those of us who rose in the House to force the bill to that legislative committee did not contemplate, nor did we want to see, the government go into the committee and refer it back to the House.

We wanted further consideration. We could have continued the debate in the House. I suppose, if we wanted to, we could have continued the debate in the House, but instead we believed it would be better to go to committee, perhaps to have a day of hearings — as I recall, we didn't ask for more than a day of hearings — so the clerks and treasurers, who say that this bill will cause chaos in this province, could come forward; so that representatives of municipalities, who will be censored by one of the provisions of this bill from putting anything in the tax bill explaining why the tax bill is changing this time — none of those people is going to have an opportunity to appear before the committee.

The committee is simply going to have its five or six or seven or eight government members sit in the committee and vote as the government whip tells them to, to send this back into the House, and there will have been no consideration of this legislation in the committee. I think it would be a dangerous step and an alarming step to allow the government to once again come forward with yet another escalation of closure and the way in which closure shall be applied in this province.

Hon Mr Sterling: Madam Speaker, opposition members have argued that this time allocation motion in some way abrogates our standing orders. I would argue that it does not.

The question is, can a time allocation motion provide for the question of a certain stage of the legislative process to be put forthwith, without debate or amendment? This is not the first time that a provision has been made to allocate time for a committee stage of a bill after a bill has been referred to a standing committee. Indeed, this was done many times by the New Democratic government. Consider their time allocation motions with respect to Bill 171, Bill 165 and Bill 163.

Indeed, Speaker Warner, in his ruling of July 21, 1992, respecting the New Democratic government's Bill 150, stated:

"There was some mention yesterday about whether previous time allocation motions in this House have ever provided that the question on a certain stage of the legislative process be put forthwith without debate or amendment. I have reviewed the time allocation motions that have been moved in this chamber since 1982, and I have found that eight of them contained just such a provision with respect to the adoption of a report of a standing committee, the adoption of a report of the committee of the whole House, or both."

There have also been a number of instances where time allocation motions have contained just such a provision with respect to third reading debate on a bill. The New Democratic government's Bill 150 is a case in point.

The standing order of this Legislative Assembly which provides for time allocation, standing order 46(a), states: "The government House leader or any minister of the crown may move a motion with notice providing for the allocation of time to any proceeding on a government bill or substantive government motion." In this instance we have applied that provision within the standing committee process. You will note, as Speaker Warner said, that "the standing order does not require that the motion provide for a minimum period of debate." However, as you, Madam Speaker, have noted, it is within the power of the government, of any government, for that matter, under the provisions of standing order 46 — I would note that on page 13452 of Hansard on December 2 of this year, Speaker Stockwell said:

"In many sessions in order to secure the passage of particularly important and controversial legislation, governments have been confronted with the choice, unless special powers are taken, of cutting down their normal program to an undesirable extent, or of prolonging the sittings of Parliament, or else of acknowledging the impotence of the majority of the House in the face of the resistance of the minority. In such circumstances resort is had sooner or later to the most drastic method of curtailing debate known to procedure, namely, the setting of a date by which a committee must report, or the allocation of a specified number of days to the various stages of a bill and of limited amounts of time to particular portions of a bill."

This particular motion refers the bill to the standing committee — that has already been done — but allows the standing committee members to vote on each and every section of the bill, to either approve or reject those sections of the bill. So there is, in I guess a broader context, some consideration or some part of each member of the committee — it's a narrow concept, I agree. However, it's felt by the government that it is necessary to have passage of this bill at this time, before we break later this week.

1610

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): I'd just like to add two concepts to this. It may very well be that the government wants legislation, but that's no reason the motion in front of us is necessarily in order.

If I could just refer to section 46(a), it says, "The government House leader or any minister of the crown may

move a motion with notice providing for the allocation of time to any proceeding on a government bill...." Any proceeding includes the process of it going to committee. It can allocate the amount of time it can be at that committee, but surely with the allocation of time there is the concept that there's going to be some time for debate and discussion. To include in the motion the notion that there will be no debate whatsoever is not an allocation of time. That's the first point I want to make, that the motion itself is in direct conflict with 46(a) because there has been no allocation of time. The motion itself says that it shall be voted upon without any debate.

I would also like to draw your attention to section 106(a). It states, "Standing and select committees shall be severally empowered to examine, inquire into and report from time to time on all such matters as may be referred to them by the House." To allow absolutely no debate at the committee level means that there's no time to examine, no time to inquire into and no time to report from time to time by that committee. It is my suggestion to you, Madam Speaker that standing order 106(a) has been completely violated. Part of our standing orders has been completely violated by this notice of motion.

With respect to both sections 46 and 106, the motion is out of order.

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): Just briefly, I want to underscore a point that what we have here is a situation in which, if the government motion is allowed to stand, that decision and your ruling to let that stand will, in effect, nullify the provision of rule 71(c) as it relates to 12 members being able to stand in their place and therefore send a bill to committee. That is a very clear part of the standing orders.

This is not about whether the government has the right to time-allocate bills or to decide in that time allocation process that they want bills to bypass the committee. It's their right to do so, but this is a very different situation from that, Speaker. This is not a situation in which the government House leader has brought in a time allocation motion which we have objected to but which under the rules they can do. This is a situation in which there has already been a decision exercised by 12 members in this House. It's one of the few places, if not the only place, in the standing orders where a minority of 12 members have the right by virtue of standing in their place, not as a majority decision but as 12 members, to exert upon the rest of this House a decision, and that decision is to be able to refer a bill to committee where then it is to be considered. If the government House leader is then allowed to bring in a motion that simply bypasses that, then the question has to be asked, what is the point of that standing order? It doesn't mean anything.

I don't think you can uphold a ruling that nullifies a clear standing order, particularly, as our House leader, Mr Wildman, has pointed out, in light of how you now have to read the standing orders. As you know, as they have been rewritten, they have a different purpose, a very much more clear purpose set out which says that the proceedings in this House have to be "conducted in a manner that re-

spects the democratic rights of members." The democratic rights of members in this case include a very clear standing order that says that any 12 members standing in their place can cause a bill to go to committee.

If the government House leader or anybody is now allowed to come in with a motion and by virtue of the majority that they control override that decision made by the House by virtue of 12 members standing in their place, then it nullifies that particular standing order. I want to say to you that I don't think you can uphold as valid any motion that would then nullify a clear standing order such as that one that allows 12 members to make that decision.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Government House leader, if you could just be as brief as you can.

Hon Mr Sterling: Yes, I will be brief. Standing order 46 is quite clear that after second reading debate has been concluded, which it has, a time allocation motion can be moved. Speaker Stockwell has ruled that such time allocation motions, in effect, suspend the standing orders and that the procedures are taken henceforth from the instructions contained or the motions within that standing order. I believe that is the position of the Speaker in the past and I believe that sustains this motion and it is in order.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Algoma, please try to be brief.

Mr Wildman: I just want to underline two things. The precedent cited from Speaker Warner by the government House leader referred in all cases, I understand, to situations where matters had been before committees for a considerable length of time. In this particular case, the matter has just been referred to committee. There has been no consideration, no debate in committee. This motion essentially prohibits committee.

If this time allocation motion is found to be in order, then it renders moot standing order 71(c). If that is the case, then that can hardly be in line with standing order 1(b), that the business of the House will be "conducted in a manner that respects the democratic rights of members" to hold the government accountable for its policies.

Again, I call on you to rule not only on the exact, literal wording of the standing orders but the purpose set out in 1(b) and the intent of the standing orders and all of our commitment, I hope, to a democratic process.

The Deputy Speaker: Member for Cochrane South, I hope you will be brief, because I think I've heard all the arguments now, so I can go and deliberate.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): I will just add one component of this. The government House leader got up and said that according to the Speaker's ruling the government can introduce a closure motion or a time allocation motion that would basically do anything around changing the standing orders. The question I would have, and what you have to reflect on, is that if that's true, does that mean that the government would have the ability to say, for example: "We will not place the mace on the table," or, "The Speaker shall not take his chair"?

The point that my friend from Dovercourt made was that what they're doing in this particular point is saying

that members cannot by rule 71(c) have the opportunity to be able to send a bill into committee. That to me is a very fundamental right of what we're able to do here.

For the government House leader to get up and say, "We can do what we want by amending the rules through a closure motion," I would dare to say not all of the things in there you would really have the right to do. I can't believe that any Parliament, for example, would say, "We're going to change the rules so we don't have to have the mace on the table." It would be the same thing as 71(c).

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you to all of you for your submissions. I am going to take a 15-minute recess so I can deliberate and come back with a ruling.

The House recessed from 1619 to 1646.

The Deputy Speaker: In August of this year, the standing orders were amended. Among the changes was one that added the purpose clause to standing order 1.

This change made explicit what was traditionally an implicitly understood concept, that is, it has always been the case that members have had the democratic rights to submit resolutions, motions and bills for the consideration of the assembly; to debate, speak to and vote on these same resolutions, motions and bills; to hold the government accountable for its policies, and for members, collectively, to decide matters submitted to the assembly.

The new standing order 1(b) sets out the purpose of the standing orders; in fact, it ably defines the very purpose of the chamber itself. All of these activities I have just described are precisely the essence of the legislative process, and are indeed the reason we are all here. Codifying this fact did not make it so; it has always been so.

Creating this new standing order did not change established custom and practice, but the fact that the change was made deliberately in the August 1997 amendments leads me to believe that it was the will of the House that explicit recourse be had to these principles when the standing orders are being interpreted.

The issue I must resolve is whether the time allocation motion has the effect of diminishing, or denying to any member, the rights that members have under standing order 1(b). Clearly, it does. The fact that members wishing to move amendments may not have the opportunity to do so offends clause 1(b)(i). The fact that time might not be available to every member who wishes to speak offends clause 1(b)(ii).

Time allocation motions, though, by their very nature cause this to be the case. As Erskine May states, time allocation motions "may be regarded as the extreme limit to which procedure goes in affirming the rights of the majority at the expense of the minorities of the House."

There is clearly a conflict here. Standing order 1 sets out the rights of members, whereas standing order 46 makes provision for a procedure that, in essence, takes standing order 1 and throws it out.

To resolve this conflict, therefore, I must be guided by our practice and custom. There is nothing new about time allocation motions. Indeed, it is not even new to see a time allocation motion that deals with more than one bill at the

same time. This House has dealt with these motions many times before. In each instance, the rights of members were impacted upon in a way that limited their ability to participate in the legislative process to the fullest extent possible.

This occurred prior to the August 1997 standing order amendments, when the rights set out in standing order 1 were the unwritten but received wisdoms of this place. It has occurred many times since then, with the same result: Some members may have found themselves, by majority decision of their colleagues, unable to fully assert their rights set out in standing order 1.

While pushing procedure to the extreme limit that a time allocation motion represents is undoubtedly not viewed by any of us as desirable, it is nevertheless an accepted practice that this House has used many times before.

While standing order 1 may elevate the test that other procedures must pass in order for the rights of members to be affirmed, the time allocation motion, by its very nature, must logically be protected and saved from it. If it were otherwise, then it is plausible to foresee a scenario where a single member, by asserting the protection set out in standing order 1, could thwart the House from ever concluding consideration of an item of business that the remainder of the House demonstrably wishes to conclude.

Since the opportunity for such occurrences is rare, they happen rarely. More often it is the case, as Erskine May states, "(g) Governments have been confronted with the choice, unless special powers are taken, of cutting down their normal program to an undesirable extent, or of prolonging the sittings of Parliament, or else of acknowledging the impotence of the majority of the House in the face of the resistance of the minority."

The method to deal with this circumstance is the time allocation motion. By its nature, it diminishes the rights of members and indeed it will most likely offend the principles set out in standing order 1. However, time allocation motions are part of the accepted procedure of this House. As a method of curtailing debates, they essentially suspend the standing orders and are in essence an exempt class of motion with respect to standing order 1. As a result, I find that the time allocation motion is not out of order on the basis of the argument surrounding the "purpose" clause in the standing orders.

I want to say at this time too to the government that I think that my ruling here makes it very clear to all of us that minority rights are affected in this kind of —

Mr Bradley: Non-existent.

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please.

I would say that it's a very good example and shows us once again why time allocation motions should not be used on a regular basis but should be used in extreme circumstances altogether. I have to say that I do have some concerns about the amount of time and the regularity with which time allocation motions are now being moved, because as my ruling states clearly today, there is no doubt about it, the minority rights are infringed on once

time allocation motions are brought forward. Thank you for your attention.

Mr Wildman: On a point of order, Speaker: I respect your ruling and I accept it. I would point out, though, that I wasn't speaking to the other time allocation motion that deals with more than one bill. I was referring to Bill 164.

My argument did not just turn on standing order 1; it also referred to standing order 71(c), which I note you did not mention in your ruling.

The Deputy Speaker: Just to clarify here, although I didn't refer to standing order 71(c) specifically in my ruling, I think it is an example precisely of what happens when time allocation motions are brought in.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: To the member for Algoma, order please.

I just want to make this very clear. I have registered with everybody my displeasure at the implication of time allocation motions. However, it is within the rules. But I have said, and I will repeat again, in fact it's clear that it does affect minority rights. I think that at all times, governments have to take that into account when they choose to move to time allocation motions.

Hon Mr Sterling: I will be sharing my time with the member for Nepean and the member for Scarborough Centre.

Madam Speaker, I appreciate your ruling and would point out to you and to other members of the Legislature that the whole notion of time allocation motions was introduced by the former NDP government, and while this government has had to use time allocation on a number of occasions, we still have not yet reached the record set by the former NDP government, which used time allocation on 23 separate pieces of legislation.

We have attempted in the past to negotiate with the other House leaders, the other parties, with regard to —

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Order. The Chair recognizes the member for Cochrane South on a point of order.

Mr Bisson: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: It says explicitly in the rules of the Legislature that you cannot mislead anybody by way of your speech. The member opposite was trying to imply that time allocation motions were an invention of the previous NDP government. Time allocation motions have been used in legislatures across Canada, unfortunately far too often, and were not an invention of the NDP government.

The Acting Speaker: That is not a point of order. The rules that we go by are that you can't accuse someone of that. They don't say that you can.

Hon Mr Sterling: I think that I strike too close to home when I bring forward the idea that time allocation was put in the standing orders by the former government at the insistence of their House leader. That was the first time that was ever included in the standing orders of the Legislature of Ontario.

We have in the past attempted on what one could consider even minor pieces of legislation to encourage the opposition to come forward with some kind of cooperation

to limit debate on bills which, in some cases, they voted in favour of or didn't even force a division on. However, that cooperation has not been forthcoming on many occasions and has been a rare fact of the matter.

What that does, of course, is back up the legislative program of the government with regard to other important matters.

Mr Wildman: When was first reading of this bill, Norm?

The Acting Speaker: Member for Algoma, come to order, please.

Mr Gerretsen: You can't mislead the House, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: I'd ask you to withdraw that. Member for Kingston and The Islands, I'm asking you to withdraw that statement.

Mr Gerretsen: Withdraw what statement, Mr Speaker?

The Acting Speaker: I just ask you to withdraw or not.

Mr Gerretsen: All I said was you cannot mislead the House.

The Acting Speaker: Either withdraw or I'll name you.

Mr Gerretsen: I'll withdraw.

Hon Mr Sterling: I was trying to inform the public with regard to what has been going on in this Legislature over a long period of time. The fact of the matter is that we don't encourage putting forward time allocation motions but the government is forced to that position.

Interjection.

Mr Wildman: You think everything's a joke, Jim. You don't understand what we're talking about.

Hon Jim Flaherty (Minister of Labour): I understand what you you're talking about. Look at other legislatures in Canada.

Mr Wildman: You're a new boy here. You don't have the faintest idea.

The Acting Speaker: Order. I'd ask the minister and the member for Algoma —

Mr Wildman: The man is being very provocative.

The Acting Speaker: Grab a hold of yourself. Bring yourself to order or I'll have you removed.

Mr Wildman: Do whatever you have to do.

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes the government House leader.

Hon Mr Sterling: With regard to Bill 164, these matters are the implementation of the 1997 budget of the government and have been known to the public and to the opposition and to other people for a long period of time. There are many people who have expressed their opinion on the various parts of this particular bill before the bill actually was introduced to the Legislature.

With regard to the principles in this bill, there has been considerable debate already not only in this Legislature during question period, but we've heard it in petitions, we've heard it from stakeholders, we've heard it from a number of people. It is unfortunate that the Legislature can't operate in a more cooperative fashion but that's the

way it is and, unfortunately, the government is forced to do this.

I would now like to yield the floor to my friend from Nepean, who will further elaborate on this issue.

1700

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean): I want to discuss the process that led up to Bill 164 being introduced. Bill 164 is a budget bill arising from the measures contained in the 1997 budget. There was a significant amount of discussion and public consultation leading up to the introduction of the budget this past May. The first process in terms of —

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order. Member for St Catharines, I would ask you to withdraw that remark, please, that you threw across the floor.

Mr Bradley: Well, whatever it was, and I can't recall what it was, I'm happy to withdraw it. I'm unhappy to withdraw it.

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member for Nepean.

Mr Baird: There was a significant amount of public consultation leading up to the introduction of the budget in May. That process started when the standing committee on finance and economic affairs met to conduct pre-budget consultations in the province. They heard both written submissions from groups around Ontario and oral submissions from witnesses at the committee directly.

We did hear from a whole host of groups in that committee, whether it was the Ontario Home Builders' Association, the Council of Ontario Construction Associations or the Ontario Public School Boards' Association. We heard substantially in that public consultation process from the Canadian Advanced Technology Association, the United Steelworkers of America, the Middlesex Federation of Agriculture, the Canadian Federation of Students, Restructuring for a Competitive Economy, Citizens for Public Justice —

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member for Nepean.

Mr Baird: We heard from the Ontario Public Health Association. We heard from a terrific number of associations during those pre-budget consultations. These were the written submissions that the standing committee on finance and economic affairs heard from. They also heard also a terrific amount from those who presented at the committee itself during the pre-budget consultations. There was a terrific amount heard at committee that's reflected in this budget bill and that was reflected in the budget. That committee heard these public consultations.

They then went on and wrote a report which provided more consultation and advice to the government. It recommended a whole host of measures, whether it was dealing with small business, whether it was dealing with research and development, whether it was dealing with the challenge of youth employment in our society — a terrific amount.

We then had more consultation when the Minister of Finance met, as does every Minister of Finance of the day,

with a good number of groups across the province. He spoke with business representatives; spoke with home builders; spoke with developers; spoke with the forestry, resources and mining industries; spoke with manufacturing and high technology: the Canadian Advanced Technology Association, the Ontario Aerospace Council, the Canadian Chemical Producers' Association, the Information Technology Association of Canada, the Alliance of Manufacturers and Exporters. He heard from a lot of social services groups, whether it was the United Way, the Ontario Association for Community Living, the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies, seniors' groups. He heard from the financial industry, the insurance industry; heard from a number of groups concerned with pensions, the Ontario Federation of Labour among them; heard from the agricultural community, whether it was the farmers of Ontario, the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario; heard from a lot of education groups, the Ontario Learning Disabilities Association, the Council of Ontario Universities; heard from representatives of the automobile manufacturing industry in Ontario, including the Canadian Vehicle Manufacturers' Association; heard from various health groups, tourism groups; heard from a good number of economists.

The minister considered all that input with the input we had heard from SCOFEA. He then presented his budget in this place in May. This budget was presented in May. So the contents of Bill 164 have been known for a good amount of time. The minister presented his budget in May and then we debated that budget in this place again. All the measures contained in this piece of legislation, whether the Ontario new technology tax incentive, the Ontario film and television tax credit, the graduate transitions tax credit, the cooperative education — all these tax credits designed to create jobs in Ontario were debated extensively in the House when the minister presented his budget. In addition, during the 1997 debates on the budget, we debated it for a number of days in this place.

There is also a component of this piece of legislation which deals with property assessment, and again, a considerable amount of debate on that too. I could go on and on. This government consulted and this government listened to what it heard. A lot of what it heard was presented in the 1997 budget, and a lot of what was heard was presented in Bill 164, designed to create more jobs, whether in the research and development industry, opportunities for young people, the graduate transitions measures in this budget or the cooperative education measures in this budget, which are very important to young people looking for their very first job.

There has been a considerable amount of public input on this budget and these measures. There is also part of Bill 164 —

Mr Wildman: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: For the third time, is there a quorum present?

The Acting Speaker: I will take all points of order that are given civilly and in proper place in the House. Is there a quorum present?

Clerk Assistant (Ms Deborah Deller): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk Assistant: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. The Chair recognizes the member for Nepean.

Mr Baird: In addition to the consultations on this budget bill, Bill 164, that led up to the introduction of the bill, there was also a terrific amount of discussion about property assessment services in Ontario; that's part of Bill 164. This issue has been discussed for many years, not just in this place with Bill 149, the first property tax assessment bill; it has also been discussed in reports by AMO and has also been discussed by other groups.

It was discussed by the previous NDP government —

The Acting Speaker: Order. I can't have members wandering about the House talking. Either remove yourselves or go to your seats, if you feel the necessity of talking. The Chair recognizes the member for Nepean.

Mr Baird: Returning property assessment to the municipalities where it existed prior to a move made by the Davis government has been talked about for many years. I mentioned that it has been talked about by the Association of Municipalities of Ontario in a report dated October 1992. It also, believe it or not, was an idea of the previous government which, in 1992, issued a number of reports on this issue to the province of Ontario, on the need for an NDP solution to this issue. It's contained as well in Bill 164.

It was also discussed by the previous Liberal government. It was more than just discussion. This issue was dealt with in Bill 156 in 1990, when the Liberal government of the day presented a bill, Bill 156, An Act to establish the Property Assessment Corporation, presented by the Honourable Remo Mancini, Minister of Revenue at that time. So there was a considerable amount of discussion on this issue by all three parties, not just contained in Bill 164 but contained in Liberal proposals and New Democratic Party proposals as well, and sometimes even legislation was tabled in this House, as it was with the previous Liberal government of the day.

They weren't able to debate that piece of legislation because David Peterson, the then Premier, decided to call an election two years and 10 months into his first full term and was soundly rejected by the people for going to the polls two years and 10 months into an election term. So there's been a considerable amount of discussion on this issue.

1710

All of this consultation leading up to the introduction of the budget that I have described was presented in the budget, and then there was considerable debate on the budget. The Minister of Finance also consulted with additional stakeholders who gave the government advice on how we could build on the ideas contained in the budget to make them work better for job creation, whether they be for young people, whether they be for research and development in Ontario, or probably most importantly, for job creation for small business development. There are a

number of measures contained in Bill 164 on small business and job creation that arose out of the 1997 budget. The minister was able to listen and get some additional feedback from stakeholders in those consultations and has been able to make it even better.

There has also been a considerable amount of discussion on Bill 164 with respect to various components; for instance, the property tax assessment and how tax bills are to be labelled. There's a desire or goal to have the tax bills in Ontario be transparent and consistent so that they can be read with ease.

I thought about this issue and I took out my own tax bill from the city of Nepean. I'd have to agree that it's at times confusing and difficult to read. The idea of having a standard tax form, which would be consistent and transparent across Ontario was a good one, but it wasn't a new idea. It wasn't the first time that anyone had done it. I did check the federal legislation in this area and in the federal Income Tax Act the federal government and the minister have the right to prescribe a certain format for income tax forms, and that can't be done on an individual basis by the provincial government in each province, because there is a desire to keep it consistent and transparent. That measure is just repeated in Bill 164, that there be a uniform tax form. Municipalities are of course free to send things with that tax bill; they're free to send things under separate cover if they choose. There's nothing stopping that in Bill 164, which is very, very important.

We debated Bill 164 in this place for three days after first reading, three days on second reading. The most remarkable thing happened: Every member who wanted to speak had the opportunity to speak on Bill 164. Every member of this place who wanted to address concerns on Bill 164 had the opportunity to speak. We had a full three days of debate in this place. Second reading is agreeing to the bill in principle, the substantial part of the legislative process where we decide as a House collectively, as a Legislative Assembly collectively, whether we support a bill, and every single member who wanted to speak on that bill had the opportunity to speak. There was even time left over when other members could have had the opportunity to rise, but no members rose. Everyone who wanted to speak on this bill had the opportunity. We heard additional debate on this bill as well as discussions on the financial services act in the standing committee on finance and economic affairs and their consultations this past October, so a substantial amount of public input.

I want to also outline the specifics of Bill 164 arising out of Mr Eves's budget presented in May 1997.

The Ontario new technology tax incentive, which was introduced in the budget, is contained in Bill 164. It is designed to help improve the competitiveness of our research and development regime in Ontario. Research and development is an incredibly important economic engine in Ontario. In my home community of Ottawa-Carleton a terrific number of jobs have been created in the research and development area. What we want to do is help ignite more and more research and development jobs in Ontario.

When you look at small businesses in Ontario, a group like Newbridge Networks in Kanata, which began 10 years ago, was a very, very small company. It had revenues of less than \$1 million a year. It's a small business success story in Ontario. It now has revenues of \$1 billion, \$1.5 billion. What we want to do as the government of Ontario is to try to encourage more small businesses to do their research and development in Ontario. That's the important part.

The Ontario film and television tax credit is designed to encourage more investment in the Ontario film and television industry, which is a big job creator here in Ontario. The member for Scarborough-Ellesmere, who's here in the House today, was a big promoter of that, and that's been good for job creation in Ontario. But as announced in the budget, we need to follow through with legislation as contained in Bill 164.

We also developed in the budget the graduate transitions tax credit designed as providing an incentive for businesses to hire graduates. Youth unemployment is a major concern for all political parties in Ontario and this bill seeks to follow through on that budget because youth unemployment has got to be an important priority.

The cooperative education tax credit contained in the budget and followed through in legislation in this bill is very important. In my community a lot of co-op education students that the —

Mr Gerretsen: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: We are dealing with a very specific time allocation motion at this point in time, as to why this bill should be called for third reading and as to why the committee does not have any opportunity to debate the bill at all tonight when it meets at 7 o'clock. This member's talking about the merits of Bill 164. He's not made any reference at all to the time allocation motion, which is the motion we're discussing here today. I ask you to remind him to either take his seat or to just stick to this time allocation motion.

The Acting Speaker: That is a point of order. I will listen attentively to the member and hope that he brings his debate within the terms of the motion. The Chair recognizes the member for Nepean.

Mr Baird: The importance of dealing with Bill 164 expeditiously to help the folks I've been talking about is very important, and that's exactly the content of the motion before the House at this time.

The Ontario book publishing tax credit, another important job creator in the cultural industries in Ontario, follows through from another budget commitment made in May and which has received generally widespread support.

The Ontario computer animation and special effects tax credit is contained in this bill. That's important for job creation in Ontario. The member for Scarborough-Ellesmere was a big promoter of that, I know.

The Ontario business retail research institute tax credit: again a very, very important program for our research and development industry. That's a growing industry in Ontario. Whether it's in Ottawa-Carleton or whether it's in the greater Toronto area — I know there are a number of

high-tech firms located in the riding of Markham. I know there are a lot of high-tech firms in the Cambridge-Kitchener-Waterloo area. That will help create jobs.

The harmonization of capital tax surcharge and small business investment tax credits, designed to help small business with simplifying the rules, that's part of Bill 164 and that's why we need to pass Bill 164, so that those benefits can be realized by small businesses in Ontario because small business in Ontario is the economic engine of Canada and the economic engine of the province and it's important that we should help out.

A number of other benefits in the bill that we need to pass with this motion are contained in the Income Tax Act. The Ontario child care tax credit is very, very important, to provide families with more favourable tax treatment in the raising of their children.

As well, there are a number of other amendments designed in the area of labour-sponsored venture capital corporations and a number of other technical amendments to seek to work with the federal Department of Revenue on these issues.

My point in all this is that there's been a terrific amount of consultation, before the budget was presented, when the budget was presented and leading up into the introduction of Bill 164. It follows through on a number of the budget commitments which is extremely important here in Ontario.

The part of the bill that deals with property assessment is as well important. Again, the issue of returning property tax assessment to the municipalities is not a new one. There's been a terrific amount of public discussion and consultation among the affected parties. I mention that that was done by the Association of Municipalities of Ontario in October 1992. It was done by the Liberal government of the day through Bill 156, a Liberal bill, and that was as well proposed as a New Democratic Party solution. It's important that that be noted because the measures in these bills are not new. They're not something that was done without a terrific amount of consultation, and that's something that's very important.

For anyone to leave the suggestion there wasn't a terrific amount of public consultation on these bills simply defies the large quantity of paper the government was able to have as input in the preparation of Bill 164. By passing this motion, Bill 164 will help create jobs in Ontario. It will help do a number of important activities and initiatives that are coming out of the 1997 budget.

The importance of passing it before the end of 1997, so that these measures can be contained in the budget, is very important. That's why we want to seek the approval of the House prior to the finalization of the Revenue Canada tax forms, so that there can be a realization of the jobs in Ontario, so that there can be more jobs in research and development and more jobs in cultural industries, something that's extremely important here in the city of Toronto, something that can be important for encouraging more research and development and high technology industries in Ontario, something to help harmonize some

of our rules with Revenue Canada. This will all help create more jobs and more opportunities.

I would like to yield the remainder of my time to my colleague the member for Scarborough Centre.

1720

Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Centre): It's my pleasure to join in the debate today on the time allocation motion before us on Bill 164, the Tax Credits to Create Jobs Act, 1997. It's a very important bill that's before the House that deals with tax cuts and tax credits. Many of the credits include the graduate transitions tax credit, the cooperative education tax credit, the community small business investment funds program, the small business investment tax credit, the Ontario Business Research Institute tax credit for research and development, the Ontario new technology tax incentive, the Ontario computer animation and special effects tax credit, the Ontario film and television tax credit, the Ontario book publishing tax credit, the child care tax credit, and also provides for the return of property assessment to municipalities, which are all included within Bill 164, a bill that has a lot of measures in it to create jobs for the people of Ontario.

The 1997 budget dealt with several measures that supported youth employment in small business job creation in our province. It also dealt with improving access to capital for small businesses, which we all know are very important, people who create jobs right across this province. The budget also promoted cultural industries. It fostered research and development and innovation and, as I mentioned, introduced a child care tax credit. It also simplified and modernized Ontario's capital tax system for financial institutions and established a not-for-profit corporation to deliver property tax assessment services in our province.

To support small business job creation for youth and for skills training, the 1997 budget introduced the graduate transitions tax credit and expanded eligibility for the cooperative education tax credit. These credits will encourage businesses to help unemployed graduates of post-secondary institutions get experience in a tough job market and to hire students in leading-edge technology programs and to help them gain valuable work experience. That's something members I believe on all sides of the House would want to support. The credits are also available for businesses to hire post-secondary co-op students or graduates and to provide salaries, wages and benefits.

It also, as I mentioned, talked about accessing capital for small businesses, and to increase access to capital for small businesses in our province we are introducing legislation to create the community small business investment funds and to enhance and simplify the small business investment tax credit for financial institutions, all good news for the people of my riding of Scarborough Centre and indeed for all ridings across our province.

The community small business investment funds announced were to encourage communities to partner with financial institutions, labour-sponsored investment funds and local investors to provide greater access to capital for small local growth businesses, and that creates jobs in our province.

As a result of the consultations, the community small business investment funds framework will be enhanced by expanding sponsorship, enriching incentives for financial institutions, and by enriching the operating expense allowance to a lifetime maximum of 30% and expanding the range of businesses that are eligible to receive financing. This is all good news for the people of our province.

The small business investment tax credit for financial institutions is a very important part of the bill, because the small business investment tax credit for financial institutions allows financial institutions to recover part of the taxes, provided they are lending money to small businesses, and that's something small businesses have told us right across this province. They've had difficulty in accessing capital from our financial institutions.

The cultural industries are also promoted through the investment of highly paid leading-edge jobs and investment in Ontario as a result of the bill.

It's also important to look at the enhancements to the Ontario book publishing tax credit. As announced in the budget of May 1997, book publishing companies are eligible for refundable tax credits at a rate of 30% on preproduction and promotional costs and 15% on production costs for publishing the works of first-time Canadian authors. It gives those authors the opportunity to get that first book published, something that's really a barrier for those people who are authoring these books, because of these costs they incur in trying to get that book to production and that prevent them from getting that book finally published.

Following the consultations with industry stakeholders, the eligibility has been expanded to include children's books by first-time illustrators, which I think is an excellent inclusion in the bill. It also includes educational titles, and qualifying expenditures will also include the publishing costs of unpublished books as of May 6 and also cover any expenses through a tax credit while on a promotional tour to try to sell those copies of that book by the first-time author.

Bill 164 also added enhancements to the Ontario film and television tax credit by increasing the tax credit rate to 20% from 15% on qualifying labour expenditures after May 6, 1997, and by raising the annual corporate tax limit to \$3 million from \$2 million. This will help ensure that Ontario continues to be a leading film and television production centre in North America. Ontario will be introducing legislation to expand the films that would be eligible under this tax credit.

The Ontario computer animation and special effects tax credit introduced allows for digital animation and digital visual effects produced in Ontario for use in film or television productions. That tax credit has been increased to 20% from 15% and that would be effective July 1, 1997.

Also, throughout Bill 164 there are tax credits for research and development in Ontario.

The Ontario business-research institute tax credit will foster world-class research institutions in Ontario and promote partnerships in business and Ontario non-profit research institutions. The province has introduced a 20%

refundable Ontario business-research institute tax credit for business-sponsored R&D performed by certain non-profit research institutes. This is good news for the people of our province.

The bill goes on and on, dealing with tax measures such as the Ontario new technology tax incentive. They're eliminating barriers to technology transfers with the add-back rule, the capital tax deduction for undeducted R&D expenditures, and improving the retail sales tax exemption for R&D equipment, as well as introducing a child care tax credit, which is another part of the bill that's very important.

1730

The new Ontario child care tax credit, which began in the 1997 taxation year, is an investment of \$40 million in working Ontario families and their children. The new tax credit will assist working families who are not benefiting from the current child care funding. About 90,000 families in this province and, more important, 125,000 children are expected to benefit from the 1997 Ontario child care tax credit. Child care expenses incurred to enable parents to work or attend school full-time will be eligible for this new credit, and that's good news for the working people and those families who are still in school.

For the 1997 tax year, the OCCTC will be at 25% of qualifying expenses to a maximum of \$400 per child under the age of seven. The credit will decline in value by 4% of family net income above \$20,000 per year. Families with two children under seven will be eligible for the OCCTC up to annual incomes of \$40,000. Eligible families will apply for the OCCTC by completing the appropriate section on the Ontario tax credit page in the 1997 tax return and the OCCTC will be paid as part of 1997 tax refunds. The OCCTC will be enriched for subsequent taxation years. In the 1997 budget the minister announced that an additional \$100 million will be used to enhance our child care tax credit for working families as the national child care benefit is phased in. These are just some of the parts of the bill that will be tax credits to create jobs right across the province.

The bill further supports small businesses by enhancing and simplifying the business investment tax credit for banks, trust companies, credit unions and caisses populaires, as I mentioned. It allows these financial institutions to earn back their tax when they invest in or lend to small businesses. Again, Mr Speaker, I think that helps you in your riding of Perth, it helps me in my riding of Scarborough Centre and indeed all members across the province.

But this budget bill that is included in the time allocation motion will be part of 30 tax cuts that this government has brought forward since taking office. I think it's important to look back and see the number of tax hikes, because there were 65 tax hikes from 1985 to 1995. There's a little bit of a race across the floor there: one party with 33 tax hikes, another party with 32 tax hikes. What we saw from the last government in five years was 32 tax hikes that brought a net loss in jobs of 10,000 in this province. So tax cuts obviously equal job creation and job figures and people who are actually working in this

province, because the legacy of the last NDP government was to hike taxes and drive investment and jobs away from this province.

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough-Ellesmere): The 33 before that.

Mr Newman: "The 33 before that," says the member for Scarborough-Ellesmere, which the Liberal Party brought.

I think it was very important to keep in mind what the finance minister said today when he updated the province on the financial situation of the province, that real economic growth was at 4.4% for 1997. There were 204,000 new private sector jobs created in the last nine months alone, a 27% increase in housing starts this year alone, and that's people who are working, who are building those homes, and people who are working to pay for that first home. I applaud the Minister of Finance for bringing those figures forward.

The information he brought forward today — to think that the deficit for 1997-98 will decline to \$5.6 billion. When we took office the deficit in this province was a staggering \$11 billion. That's money that is taken away from our future, from our children.

The previous governments were tax-and-spend governments that in the end did not create jobs for the people of Ontario. During the reign of the NDP, from 1990 to 1995, the debt more than doubled; and it tripled in the 10 years between 1985 and 1995. That takes a great deal of money away from our children, and any other money that government could spend.

It's really important to know that in Ontario alone we spend \$9 billion a year just to pay the interest on the debt. Think about it: \$9 billion to pay interest on debt. To put that \$9 billion into perspective, that's about 35% more than the cost of funding all the hospitals in Ontario. Think about that: \$9 billion in interest payments is about 35% more than the cost of funding all of Ontario's hospitals this year. Those are staggering figures.

Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls): Shameful.

Mr Newman: "Shameful," says the member for Niagara Falls. I couldn't agree with him more. To further put it in perspective, the \$9 billion in interest is equivalent to \$2,000 for every person who pays personal income tax in Ontario. That's just outrageous. As the finance minister stated today, every dollar that goes to pay interest is a dollar that could have been used to further invest in health care, that could have been used to further invest in education or could have been used to further cut taxes.

Laughter.

Mr Newman: The opposition laughs about cutting taxes. They fail to realize that the revenue of this province actually increases with asking people to pay less tax. Because you have more people working, there's less burden on the taxpayers of this province. They still don't quite get it that tax cuts equal jobs.

It's important to keep in mind that with everything this government does, we are still spending \$640,000 more each hour than we take in in revenues. Individuals cannot

do that; individuals in their small businesses can't do that; large businesses can't; the government surely can't.

In closing, I will be voting in favour of this motion.

Mr Bradley: I'm very unhappy to have to speak on yet another time allocation motion or, as people who watch the television channel should know, another motion to choke off debate in the Legislative Assembly. I have not seen a more undemocratic bunch of people than I have seen in the Harris administration. This House is becoming quickly irrelevant in terms of our democratic system, because this government insists upon bringing closure motion after closure motion after closure motion to deal with bills.

What is most perturbing about these bills and various motions is that each one is more restrictive of debate, each one has something new which makes it more drastic, more reprehensible and more sinister than the last provision. This particular case is the first time I can ever recall in the history of this Legislature that a committee has been by this kind of motion denied the opportunity to consider a bill which is over 200 pages long, I believe, if you look at the full bill; a bill which amends several other pieces of legislation; a bill which has been characterized by some people as very destructive.

For instance, the Association of Municipal Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario said this about the piece of legislation that the government is ramming through this afternoon with yet another closure motion; these are people of all political persuasions or no political persuasions, but who are at the local level. They say: "This government wants to amend legislation that hasn't even passed yet. Surely, this illustrates better than anything that this government in its haste is making legislation by the seat of its pants, without proper thought or planning."

That's not an opposition party. That's not somebody who dislikes the Harris government. That's the Association of Municipal Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario. But if you want to look at the way the government deals with legislation in this House, it fits in with what the current Minister of Transportation, the Honourable Tony Clement, had to say about the way this government is going to operate. I quote him, "The way we have decided to run government is revolutionary and involves change first and then consolidation."

1740

You can see that the government simply moves forward quickly. It doesn't care what anybody else has to say. It's not prepared to modify its legislation at all. This bill, as large as it is, should be subject to amendments in committee. The government has a majority. It can reject those amendments. It would have been very useful to hear from municipalities, many of which are sitting tonight. Having now faced the downloading — I mentioned that Niagara is \$25 million short, and this downloading exercise of the provincial government dumping new financial obligations and responsibilities on local governments was supposed to be revenue-neutral, and yet in Niagara, \$25 million difference.

In the city of St Catharines tonight, the council will have to decide what it's going to do. It is perturbed about this, it is concerned about this and no matter what the government members try to apologize for and agree with Mike Harris, the independent members of St Catharines city council or Niagara regional council or Port Colborne council, whatever council it happens to be, have to meet the obligations of the municipalities. These are people who have already cut their budgets to the bone. They've been doing it before other levels of government. They have nowhere else they can cut without causing great damage to the municipalities or invoking user fees or raising municipal property taxes.

If you want the blueprint for this, the blueprint is in the state of New Jersey. That's exactly what they did. They cut the state income tax so they could get all the credit for cutting a tax. They dumped the responsibility on the local municipalities and as a result, property taxes have gone up considerably. Everyone knows that property taxes do not take into account a person's ability to pay. A person's ability to pay is taken into account when you have income tax, because the more the person makes, because it's a progressive income tax, the more tax they are going to pay, but if a person is unemployed or ill or has fallen on bad luck, the municipality is not in a position to say they do not have to pay the municipal property taxes.

What you have with this time allocation motion, with this closure motion, is a government that, every day it comes into this House, gets worse in the way it deals with the democratic process. Every editor watching should be ashamed if they have rejected stories that have come from their reporters from this place and others about the rules of this House and the way this government has steamrolled over this House. That is, above all right now, an issue which is extremely important in this province.

This government has not only changed the rules of the House to give the government the upper hand in virtually every circumstance, but having changed the rules, now brings in motions on a routine basis to suspend the rules and to limit debate even further than the draconian new rules permit.

I believe that the Speaker of the House should look very carefully at this motion and at subsequent motions, because this isn't the only time allocation motion the House will have to consider. The government has tabled two more time allocation motions which will, in effect, allow the government with one particular motion to sweep five bills through the Legislature. They had one before that had six bills. One of those bills was passed. With one motion, they will be able to pass five bills.

What you do is render the elected representatives helpless in terms of representing the people of this province. I know there are some people who think this place should be run the way some large corporation is run. I don't think a large corporation, because of the way it operates, should operate under the rules of the Ontario Legislature. It wouldn't make sense. It would be silly to suggest that be the case. But I must say to you, Mr Speaker, it is an equally compelling argument to say that this House should

not operate in the relatively undemocratic way, though that's the way it is, a major corporation does. I hope the government members themselves will begin to implore the Premier, if they have any influence with him, or people who have influence in the government to reverse this trend from rendering this House next to a useless institution because of the way the government runs roughshod over the rules it has already passed, rules that heavily favour the government.

The minority in this House and perhaps on many occasions the majority of the people in this province, who on occasion disagree with this government, are having their rights run over by this government because it is efficient.

We get down to the situation where, if we look at history, there were individuals in history who were very heavy-handed. I'm not one who takes to excessive rhetoric in terms of making those comparisons. I say so only in a general sense.

There was one person who had moved a lot of things in his country many years ago and it was said of that person, when people were critical, "Well, at least the trains run on time." In Ontario, unfortunately, the trains will run on time but the democratic process is suffering. I think even people who agree with this government — and there are a number of people who do agree and I respect that very much. I talk to some people out there. I talk to many who disagree, I talk to some who agree with this government, but even those people have a stake in telling this government to stop damaging the democratic process.

This government has a five-year mandate. It's only into its second year of public office. It has plenty of time to pass its legislation, to give it good consideration, to give it detailed analysis, to be very comprehensive in the way it deals with it, to have the input from the public, from experts in the field, to have amendments put to the legislation and considered democratically. Instead, the iron fist is used in this Legislature time and again. Time and again, the government puts the boots to the opposition in this Legislature, as it has this afternoon with this time allocation motion — more ominous, more sinister every time.

I think that the editors of newspapers in this province, the editors of news programs on radio and on television, should wake up and look at what is happening in this House. I know it's dry. I know they will tell their columnists, their reporters, the people who work at Queen's Park, that the public isn't interested in this inside-the-beltway, this inside-the-House issue, that they don't have to worry about that.

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener): It's not enough that you're gonna tell the government what to do —

Mr Bradley: But what I'm saying is that this is so important to all of us, never mind the political affiliation and the silly intervention —

Mr Wettlaufer: — you're gonna tell the media.

Mr Bradley: I must say, the silly and ridiculous intervention from the member for Kitchener, who babbles away and doesn't understand that it's about this House.

Whether I agree or not with the government, I believe the government has the right to put forward its legislation.

I'm going to disagree sometimes. I believe you have that right and I believe you have a right to debate it and I encourage that full debate in this House and elsewhere. But my worry is the attitude I hear from members like the member for Kitchener, who simply wants to bulldoze ahead, shove aside the opposition and ridicule anybody who would suggest that it's important to have these kinds of debates and these kinds of procedures in this House, ultimately for the best government. Ultimately a government does its best job when it takes its time, when it considers things carefully, when it looks at things in perspective, when it takes into account opinions other than those who advise the government on a political basis or even from the civil service.

I lament very much that this motion has been allowed, first of all, to be considered this afternoon. I, in my opinion, would have said the motion was out of order. I think it's a dangerous motion which has allowed the government to proceed as it is proceeding, especially with tonight, where it'll go into a committee and, in five minutes, simply shove its bill out of committee and back into the House.

I believe the two other motions that I see today, now lumping five bills together and having those bills with one motion considered and passed, is a very dangerous and sinister new wrinkle in the government's plan, and that the government would be better off to take the additional time, come back in January if necessary, to pass this legislation. I don't mind that. I think that would be fair.

1750

Some people complained when the government brought back the House on January 13 and had the House sitting so long throughout the year. I'm not one of the people who complained because the government is entitled to do that. Better to have that happen than to simply have everything shoved into a very few weeks where we can consider legislation.

This House is becoming relatively powerless. The power in this government, as in so many governments, is now being concentrated more and more in the hands of the executive, and not only the executive in terms of the members of the cabinet but the executive in terms of the political advisers and the senior civil service who advise the government.

Each individual member in this House, every time a time allocation motion of this kind with a new wrinkle, each more sinister, each more sweeping than the last, is introduced and passed — the rights of all members of this House and ultimately the people they represent, all members of society — because we are the only people they can get at; we are the people who are democratically elected — are abrogated and diminished whenever we allow a time allocation motion of this kind, a closure motion of this kind, to pass in this House.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate? The Chair recognizes the member for Algoma.

Mr Wildman: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: According to the orders of the House, when was the vote to be called?

Interjection.

Mr Wildman: That means, Speaker, we have approximately seven minutes to present our case in this House. Some members of the House I think genuinely don't understand why the members of the opposition are upset. I think they honestly don't understand it. That may be because many of them have never served in opposition, I suppose. They will, some of them. Some of them won't be re-elected. They will rue the day, no matter who is elected as government, because when you diminish the role of the minority, you also diminish the role of the individual members, and that includes the individual backbenchers in the majority.

This is a time allocation motion which renders useless one of the orders of the House, standing order 71(c), which allows individual members, 12 of them, to stand to refer bills to committee for consideration. That was done last week with Bill 164, a bill, I remind you, that was only introduced in this House about two weeks ago. This is not a bill that has been on the order paper for a long time. This is not a bill that has been stalled. This is not a bill that has been debated at length. This is a bill that was just introduced in late November, introduced with the arrogance of power by saying: "We just introduced this. We recognize that it's 199 pages. It's a very complex tax bill that includes amendments to other bills that are before the House. We recognize that, but we need it passed before the end of the session, before Christmas."

The fact that there won't be any real debate, that there will not be any consideration of this bill, doesn't matter because the bureaucrats, the gnomes in the Ministry of Finance, have deemed it necessary to have this bill before the end of the year. So we end up with a situation with a time allocation motion that deals not just with third reading but with the committee stage.

Frankly, I disagree with the time allocation motion on third reading because there hasn't been extensive debate on this bill; it hasn't been stalled in the House. But I cannot understand at all the committee portion of this time allocation motion. What it basically says is the committee can convene as per the direction of the House, but the only thing the committee can do is hear a motion to refer the bill back to the House. There will be no consideration of the bill in committee. There will be no opportunity for amendment in committee. There will be no opportunity for amendment at all.

That really is the arrogance of power, because only an arrogant person could believe that in a bill that is this complex and this lengthy, there could be no mistakes and no need for amendment.

Interjections.

Mr Wildman: I suppose it's like talking to a wall to try and explain why members of the opposition really believe it is necessary to have committee stage to actually consider the possibility that there could be something that needs to be amended in this extensive and complex bill. But no, no. Those bureaucrats in the ministry have advised the Minister of Finance: "There's nothing wrong with this bill. We can pass it. There's nothing wrong with it. Be

assured, Treasurer, there's absolutely nothing wrong with this bill. It does exactly what you want it to do and there can be no mistakes."

The mistake here is that this process demeans this House. It demeans the democratic process. It says that individual members don't count. It says that it doesn't matter whether or not members have had the opportunity to debate and consider a bill; the minister in charge and his gnomes think they should get it through, so therefore it should be gotten through. In my view, that demeans not only the role of individual members on this side of the aisle; it demeans the role of individual members on that side.

What does this time allocation motion say to the government members? It says, "Your only role is to hold up your hand, Kremlin-style, and vote the right way." Talk about democratic centralism.

There will be one motion put in this committee to report the bill back to the House, with no consideration, not looking at anything in the bill.

The government House leader mentioned earlier that there had been time allocation motions that had moved bills out of committee in the past. That's quite true, but it was only after considerable debate in the committee that such motions were put. This motion pre-empts the committee. It stymies the committee; it prevents the committee from doing the work that the House directed it to do. It makes this whole process a sick joke. It doesn't matter what individual members think. It doesn't matter if there's opposition, if there's disagreement. It doesn't even matter if there are genuine questions to be asked about various portions of this bill, questions that should be clarified, because this government doesn't have time for debate. This government doesn't have time for disagreement.

This government doesn't have time for questions. All this government has time to do is to have people vote the right way, to act like the trained seals that too often government ministers believe their backbenchers to be. That's all this government has time for.

So despite the fact that the parliamentary assistant says the bill was first mentioned back in the budget, the bill wasn't introduced until late November. Now it's time-allocated and the time allocation motion pre-empts the rights of the individual members who referred that bill to committee, because all the committee can do is order the bill back for reporting to the House. It makes this whole process a sick joke and a process that I and my colleagues do not intend to participate in.

The Acting Speaker: Mr Sterling has moved government notice of motion number 59. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. The motion is carried.

It being past 6 o'clock, this House is adjourned until 6:30 of the clock tonight.

The House adjourned at 1800.

Evening sitting reported in volume B.

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No. 261B

N° 261B

ISSN 1180-2987

**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

First Session, 36th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Première session, 36^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Monday 15 December 1997

Lundi 15 décembre 1997

Speaker
Honourable Chris Stockwell

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Président
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 15 December 1997

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 15 décembre 1997

The House met at 1832.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

House in committee of the whole.

STREAMLINING OF ADMINISTRATION OF PROVINCIAL OFFENCES ACT, 1997

LOI DE 1997 SIMPLIFIANT L'ADMINISTRATION EN CE QUI A TRAIT AUX INFRACTIONS PROVINCIALES

Consideration of Bill 108, An Act to deal with the prosecution of certain provincial offences, to reduce duplication and to streamline administration / Projet de loi 108, Loi traitant des poursuites concernant certaines infractions provinciales, réduisant le double emploi et simplifiant l'administration.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): On a point of order, Madam Chair: I believe we don't have a quorum.

The Chair (Ms Marilyn Churley): Is there a quorum?

Clerk Assistant (Ms Deborah Deller): A quorum is not present, Chair.

The Chair ordered the bells rung.

Clerk Assistant: A quorum is now present.

The Chair: Attorney General, do you have staff joining you here?

Hon Charles Harnick (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): Yes, that would be preferable, if we may. Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Are there any amendments and, if so, to which section?

Mr Bisson: I have an amendment to section 1. Do you want me to read it?

The Chair: Just wait a minute. Okay.

M. Bisson : Je propose que le paragraphe 1(2) du projet de loi soit modifié par adjonction de l'article 176 suivant à la Loi sur les infractions provinciales :

«Maintien des droits linguistiques

«176» — c'est la nouvelle — «Une entente prévue à la présente partie n'a aucune incidence sur les droits linguistiques existants, notamment ceux reconnus par la Loi sur les services en français et la Loi sur les tribunaux judiciaires.»

The Chair: Mr Bisson has moved that subsection 1(2) of the bill be amended by adding the following as section 176 of the Provincial Offences Act:

“Language rights preserved

“176. An agreement under this part does not affect existing language rights, including those recognized by the French Language Services Act and the Courts of Justice Act.”

M. Bisson : On trouve cet amendement important sur beaucoup d'aspects. Le plus simple, c'est que premièrement il faut comprendre le contexte : c'est quoi exactement que le gouvernement essaie de faire ? Le gouvernement veut donner aux municipalités l'habilité de faire l'administration de certains services juridiques dans les municipalités.

Notre crainte est simplement celle-ci : présentement en Ontario, comme vous le savez, on a la Loi 8, qui dit que dans les régions désignées sous la Loi 8, les services provinciaux doivent être respectés en français.

En d'autres mots, si vous demeurez à Timmins ou à Sault Sainte-Marie ou à Sudbury ou à Toronto, à n'importe quelle des régions qui sont désignées, et que la province offre des services dans cette région, comme les services ambulanciers ou autres services provinciaux, la province est obligée sous la Loi 8 de donner ces services en français.

Comme vous le savez, dans la loi les francophones ont certains droits aussi quand ça en vient aux services donnés par les tribunaux de la province. La loi dit que si un processus passe aux tribunaux, la province doit offrir ces services en français à ceux qui les demandent. Ce qui arrive avec ce projet de loi, c'est que le gouvernement va transférer certaines responsabilités des tribunaux aux municipalités, qui eux feront l'administration. Nous, on craint qu'avec ce transfert, les droits linguistiques seront oubliés.

Le gouvernement nous dit — je sais qu'on l'a entendu plus tôt — que la province va négocier des ententes avec les municipalités quand on transférera ces services-là aux municipalités. C'est pour cette raison qu'on a une loi. La raison de la mise en place de la Loi 8, c'est pour s'assurer qu'on n'est pas dans une situation dans la province où les ententes peuvent être égarées d'une manière un peu difficile pour les francophones.

Bref, on trouve qu'il est important de transférer ces services-là. On trouve que c'est important de nous assurer dans la loi que les droits linguistiques des francophones seront respectés quand les transferts juridiques des tribunaux seront transférés aux municipalités. C'est pour cette raison qu'on demande l'amendement à la loi, pour garantir à la communauté francophone que nos droits seront respectés.

The Chair: Any other questions or comments?

M. Bisson : Je vais demander directement au procureur de la province, M. Harnick : vous avez besoin de donner une assurance et une réponse à la communauté francophone et à l'Ontario en général. Avec le transfert des services, est-ce que notre position, que prend le Nouveau Parti démocratique — est-ce que vous avez les mêmes craintes ? Est-ce que vous pensez que ce soit possible, en tant que procureur, si les tribunaux sont transférés, que les droits linguistiques pourront être ne pas respectés si on ne les met pas dans la loi ? C'est ce que je vous demande.

1840

Hon Mr Harnick: First of all, I'd like to correct a couple of things that the member for Cochrane South has talked about. The member alleges that the government will negotiate deals with municipalities. I might tell you, Madam Chair, that there are certain issues that are not negotiable as part of the transfer of the provincial offences court part I prosecutions. One of those areas that is not negotiable is the standards to be set for French-language services.

We are intent and it will be a condition of any transfer that existing French-language service standards will be adhered to by the municipal partners. That includes the continued use of French-language prosecutors, not translators. Certainly we guarantee that will be the standard. We also know that the Courts of Justice Act ensures trials in the French language and, in addition, any counter services that the public needs at any of these courts where there are French-language services under the French Language Services Act, existing levels of French-language services will be provided.

I don't know, Madam Chair, if at this stage you want to get involved in a discussion about the amendment or whether that will be something that we can talk about later on, but certainly I can guarantee that it is not negotiable as to whether French-language services will be available. That is not negotiable.

What the memorandum of understanding between municipalities and the Ministry of the Attorney General will say is that existing French-language service standards must be adhered to by the municipal partner, including the continued use of French-language prosecutors. The Courts of Justice Act preserves trials in the French language. Certainly the MOU, as I've outlined, will guarantee that the counter services as well will be available in the French language.

I think certainly that this is far beyond what the former NDP government provided when they brought part II from provincial control to municipal control, where I might tell you that there was absolutely nothing, no protection whatsoever for linguistic rights when part II was transferred to municipalities. The former government didn't think this was an issue. They completely ignored it.

I will give you my assurance that when we transfer to municipalities the control of prosecutions under part I of the Provincial Offences Act, existing French-language

service standards will be adhered to, including the continued use of French-language prosecutors.

I might tell you as well, Madam Chair, and I suspect we'll have an opportunity to deal with the actual amendment, this amendment that's been put forward, this rather crudely drafted amendment in fact limits what we are guaranteeing in the MOU. It takes away what the MOU would provide, because this is a limiting amendment. I will have more to say about that as we get to that part of the proceedings.

The Chair: I want to clarify here with the Attorney General, we are now debating this amendment and when the 20 minutes is up or until people are finished asking questions and making comments, then we vote on that amendment. So this is the time to speak to the amendment.

Hon Mr Harnick: Very well, Madam Chair. What I want to tell you is that if you read this amendment, the amendment says that an agreement under this part does not affect existing language rights, including those recognized by the French Language Services Act and the Courts of Justice Act. That means that the memorandum of understanding that will exist between the province and the municipality is not affected by existing language rights, including the French Language Services Act and the Courts of Justice Act.

What this says is that no matter what is in the memorandum of understanding beyond what is in these two statutes, it is of no effect. That's what the amendment says. For example, if we decide, which we have, to include in the memorandum of understanding between the province and the municipalities that we will ensure French-language prosecutors, not translators — I repeat, French-language prosecutors — then, because this is not included in the French Language Services Act or the Courts of Justice Act, therefore an MOU providing for that kind of a service, such as French-language prosecutors, is of no effect, based on the way this particular amendment is drafted.

What we are offering is a guarantee of existing French-language service standards, a guarantee under the Courts of Justice Act, for French-language trials. As well, the non-negotiable part of the memorandum will also include French-language prosecutors, not translators. I think that is a very significant expansion, particularly for a party that implemented a very similar scheme when they brought in the parking ticket issues and provided no linguistic protection for the French language. This, I think, is a significant guarantee.

I also would like to advise you that no municipality will have to enter into any of these agreements. If a municipality does not want to share in the revenue and does not want to adopt the guaranteed French-language rights, then the municipality does not have to do that. This is not a mandatory program. I certainly think that too is significant, because one of the things we are saying is that you must adhere to the French-language guarantees that I have set out, the guarantees that the former government didn't think were important enough to set out when they transferred the parking ticket legislation to the municipalities.

That's something I'd really like to hear an explanation on from the member for Cochrane South.

Certainly this is not a program that is mandatory. We will set out in our MOU exactly what the requirements are. If you wish to partake in the revenues that will be available to municipalities, then you must adopt the level of French-language services that will be set out in the MOU. There is nothing more to it than that.

Madam Chair, I will tell you that if this NDP amendment is passed, then those who need services in the French language, those who would prefer a French-language prosecutor over a translator, will not be guaranteed that service. I can tell you that what we are offering by way of French-language guarantees and French-language prosecutors and French-language trials will all be guaranteed in the MOU and that MOU goes far beyond what this amendment offers.

1850

M. Jean-Marc Lalonde (Prescott et Russell) : Tout d'abord, le projet de loi s'intitule «Loi traitant des poursuites concernant certaines infractions provinciales, réduisant le double emploi et simplifiant l'administration, et c'est peut-être vrai lorsqu'on parle de simplifier l'administration, lorsqu'on parle aux unilingues anglophones. Pour eux, le fait d'aller chercher un interprète est beaucoup plus facile. Le procureur général vient de nous dire qu'on a une garantie des droits linguistiques, mais pourquoi n'incluons-nous pas cette clause dans le projet de loi actuellement ?

L'Association des juristes d'expression française de l'Ontario est très inquiète à cet égard-là. Pourquoi ne pas inclure dans ce projet de loi le fait que parmi les municipalités nous avons 23 régions désignées en Ontario ? Actuellement, je comprends que le procureur général peut dire, «Oui, nous pouvons faire une entente avec les municipalités,» mais on doit se rappeler que quelques-uns des districts ou des régions désignées rencontrent juste au minimum le pourcentage requis pour donner les services en français.

Avec ce projet de loi-là, il n'y a aucune garantie aux municipalités qui veulent les donner qu'elles pourront les donner. Mais les municipalités qui ne sont pas pressées pour donner les services dans les deux langues vont pouvoir dire, «Nous avons le projet de loi 108 qui nous protège,» mais toujours le long des discussions, même lorsqu'on va paraître devant la justice et on va demander un interprète dans la région de London, par exemple, que va-t-on devenir ? Nous avons juste un pourcentage requis, qui est au-delà de 5 % de la population, qui parle français et qui demande des services en français. Mais encore une fois le procureur général vient de nous dire que le programme est non obligatoire.

Lorsqu'on dit que le programme est non obligatoire, ça donne encore des doutes. Après d'un projet de loi de la sorte, nous devons garantir au public, aux francophones de l'Ontario, que nous allons pouvoir les servir dans leur langue. Tout ça est juste pour dire que nous avons dans le secteur de l'est de l'Ontario au-delà de 30 % de nos aînés qui ne parlent pas et ne comprennent pas l'anglais. Dans

le nord de l'Ontario nous en avons un haut pourcentage. On crie depuis nombre d'années, «Nous avons fait des progrès,» mais Statistique Canada vient de présenter ça tout récemment et là, encore une fois nous reconnaissons que nous avons une réduction dans les services français.

Je crois que l'Association des juristes d'expression française ont bel et bien raison lorsqu'ils nous disent — j'ai la lettre ici — «nous estimons essentiel que le vote de ce projet de loi, en troisième lecture, n'ait pas lieu avant que soient connues les conclusions de l'enquête du Commissaire aux langues officielles. Nous vous invitons donc à intervenir immédiatement en ce sens auprès des personnes responsables du calendrier des débats à l'Assemblée législative.»

Ce n'est pas pour rien qu'on nous a fait parvenir cette lettre. Cette lettre est signée par M^e Michel Landry, qui vient d'Ottawa ; actuellement il est ici à Toronto, je crois, depuis quelque temps.

Je crois que le procureur général doit s'assurer que nous, les francophones de l'Ontario, aurions une clause dans le projet de loi 108 qui donne non seulement le pouvoir à nous, francophones de l'Ontario, mais qui dit qu'on doit respecter la Loi 8 dans ce projet de loi — actuellement il n'y a absolument rien — et ce serait des négociations entre la province et ce gouvernement. Nous savons que de plus en plus les services français, on les réduit en Ontario. Nous réduisons les montants d'argent. Lorsqu'on regarde l'hôpital Montfort, on a complètement oublié qu'il desservait une population de 68,4 %.

On a vu ça dans le secteur Lanark-Renfrew, dont la majorité est anglophone, et on nous a dit : «Bien, à l'hôpital Montfort nous n'avons pas besoin de services en français. Nous avons seulement 18,4 % de la population francophone qui viennent chercher leurs services à l'hôpital Montfort.» Encore une fois, l'étude n'a pas été bien faite. Nous avons omis de regarder le secteur francophone de l'Ontario, mais je crois qu'il est obligatoire, et que nous en soyons certains dans ce projet de loi, de donner à toutes les municipalités dans les 23 régions désignées les services dans les deux langues, que toute contravention devra être donnée dans les deux langues, et qu'à chaque fois qu'on va paraître devant la justice, on ait le choix de paraître devant un juge de langue française lorsqu'on le demande.

M. Bisson : C'est intéressant : qui croire ? C'est ça la question. Le procureur général se lève en Chambre aujourd'hui puis il dit : «Ne vous inquiétez pas, les francophones. On va prendre soin de vous ; on vous aime. Vous êtes à nous. C'est le gouvernement de Mike Harris qui va garantir que les services en français vont être respectés.»

Mais je veux vous dire pourquoi je suis un peu inquiet, Monsieur le procureur général. C'est très simple. Vous avez sans doute connu M. George Thomson, qui était déjà l'ancien sous-procureur général de l'Ontario en 1991. Présentement, il se trouve sous ministre de la Justice au fédéral. Je regarde la lettre que M. Thomson vous a envoyée, du fédéral à vous, le procureur général de la province. La lettre est datée le 10 novembre 1997. Vous

en avez sans doute une copie. Je vais lire un peu pour vous donner le contexte :

«À notre avis, le projet de loi 108 de l'Ontario ne modifiera pas de façon significative la situation des tribunaux ontariens... Par contre, il est vrai que ce projet de loi pourrait indirectement permettre aux municipalités d'utiliser des procureurs unilingues.»

Il y a à peine 10 à 15 minutes, vous vous êtes levé dans cette Chambre et vous avez rassuré les francophones de la province de l'Ontario que jamais de la vie, sous le gouvernement de Mike Harris et avec la Loi 108, il y aurait la situation que même possiblement un procureur unilingue pourrait être assigné à une personne devant les tribunaux.

Si j'en crois mon procureur, on penserait que c'est vrai. On dit : «Bien, écoute, c'est lui qui est en charge. C'est lui que Mike Harris a mis en charge de nos cours en Ontario.» Je regarde la lettre ici, datée le 10 novembre 1997. Vous dites, «Non,» mais ça vient du sous-ministre de la Justice fédérale. C'est pour lui que ces lois-là ont été transférées à vous dans la première place. Lui-même dit, «Écoute, il y a un problème.» C'est possible sous cette loi qu'un francophone soit assigné à un procureur unilingue et ça donne la même possibilité aux municipalités. Mais si vous n'êtes pas d'accord et que ça ne doit pas être fait, on vous demande très simplement d'accepter notre amendement. Ça ne vous coûte rien. L'amendement qu'on propose — c'est l'affaire qui m'écoeure avec toute la situation. L'amendement que nous, on propose au caucus NPD, ce n'est pas que le gouvernement provincial s'en va ouvrir toute une autre gamme de services aux francophones; on aimerait pas ça. Mais on sait que dans notre climat, le gouvernement de Mike Harris n'est pas pour faire ça. On a dit non, on va être raisonnables. On va seulement apporter un amendement qui dit, «Donnez-nous la garantie législative comme on a présentement, quant aux services en français, une fois transférés aux municipalités, quand ça a en vient aux cours et aux services tribunaux, que vous allez, vous, le garantir sous les lois.»

Monsieur le procureur général, justement vous avez dit, «Pourquoi, quand vous étiez le gouvernement entre 1990 et 1995, n'avez-vous pas donné ces assurances ?» Premièrement, le gouvernement de Bob Rae n'a rien à se reprocher, quand ça en vient aux services aux francophones dans cette province, comparé au record qui est — je ne peux pas utiliser les mots non parlementaires contre le gouvernement de Mike Harris. Ça a été le gouvernement de Bob Rae qui a établi deux collèges francophones en l'Ontario et j'en suis fier. C'est le gouvernement de Bob Rae qui a inclus le commencement des centres de services communautaires francophones dans cette province. C'est aussi le gouvernement de Bob Rae qui a mis en place les services qu'on n'avait pas avant quant au système de garderies dans la province.

Le gouvernement de Bob Rae a non seulement toujours dit qu'on veut seulement garantir les droits des francophones, on a aussi fait l'expansion des services aux francophones de la province. C'est pour cette raison

qu'aujourd'hui nous avons un problème avec ce que vous faites, parce que depuis 1995 le gouvernement de Mike Harris, son agenda, quand ça en vient aux services aux francophones de la province, est vraiment méchant comparé à ce que le gouvernement de Bob Rae a fait.

Bob Rae a avancé les services en français pour les francophones. Vous, qu'avez-vous fait ? Vous avez essayé de fermer le seul hôpital francophone de la province, l'hôpital Montfort. Vrai ou pas vrai ? C'est le gouvernement de Mike Harris. Seulement — «Ce n'est pas le gouvernement de Mike Harris qui a fait ça.» Voyons donc. Qu'est-ce que vous pensez que nous sommes ? Des cons ? Tu as du front tout le tour de la tête. C'est ton gouvernement qui a décidé qu'il était pour fermer l'hôpital Montfort, et ce seulement après que la communauté francophone s'est organisée comme jamais dans l'histoire de la province de l'Ontario que finalement le gouvernement de Harris a dit, «Oh, on a un problème.»

Hon Mr Harnick: Hospital Restructuring Commission.

Mr Bisson: «Hospital Restructuring Commission.» Va t'en donc, toi. C'est qui qui en a fait la nomination ? C'est le ministre de la Santé, et c'est ? C'est un membre de ton cabinet. N'essaie pas de nous faire croire que le gouvernement Harris n'a rien à faire avec la fermeture de l'hôpital Montfort. Vos mains sont partout autour de cette commission. C'est vous qui avez nommé les commissaires de cette commission, et c'est votre commission qui a pris cette décision et qui a été nommée par Mike Harris et nommée par Jim Wilson. Alors, ne rentre pas dans cette Chambre pour me dire que ça n'a rien à faire avec le gouvernement de Mike Harris. Excuse-moi, là. Qui penses-tu qu'on est ? Je te dis que c'est pour cette raison que nous autres, on ne vous fait pas confiance. Quand on regarde votre record envers les services en français dans cette province, c'est un record, franchement — je ne peux pas trouver le mot. C'est méchant. Les mots dont je veux me servir, je ne peux pas m'en servir dans cette Chambre.

Quand ça en vient aux services des centres de santé communautaires dans la province, c'est quel gouvernement qui en a retiré les fonds ? Est-ce que c'était le gouvernement de David Peterson ? Non. Est-ce que c'était le gouvernement de Bob Rae ? Non. Eux les ont augmentés. C'était le gouvernement de Mike Harris, et en respect de cette affaire-là, nous autres à Timmins, on trouve que notre centre a fermé.

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Le seul centre francophone qu'on avait, nous autres, dans notre coin, est fermé. Pourquoi ? Parce que Mike Harris a décidé qu'ils n'étaient pas prêts à nous donner ces services en français dans la province.

Je vous donne un exemple pour dire pourquoi nous voulons avoir les droits garantis dans la loi. On ne vous fait pas confiance. Vous, avec vos ententes que vous avez à décider avec une municipalité, ils nous disent que dans deux ans, trois ans la municipalité arrivera au gouvernement pour se faire dire : «Écoute, Mike Harris a ôté trop d'argent du budget de la municipalité pour qu'on soit capable de sauver de l'argent. Ça nous coûte de l'argent,

faire des services en français. Il n'y avait que deux personnes la semaine passée ou le mois passé qui les ont demandés. Ça coûte bien trop cher. On ne veut pas dépenser de l'argent.» Monsieur Mike Harris, veux-tu changer notre entente ?

Puis là, ils s'engagent à changer l'entente, et il n'y a pas de processus public en place pour que nous, les francophones, ou même l'Assemblée législative elle-même, puissent savoir ce qui arrive dans ces ententes. Et seulement après, quand cela nous aura à peine passé, on va se réveiller. Puis vous dites que ce n'est pas possible ? Non ? Je vais vous lire quelque chose.

Il y a eu le dialogue sur l'unité canadienne dont vous parlez, la parole ontarienne. La brochure en français est intéressante. D'habitude, tous les gouvernements précédents — le gouvernement de Peterson, à travers Meech Lake, s'est assuré que les Ontariens et les Ontariennes ont eu toute la documentation que le gouvernement envoyait en anglais comme en français. Dans le gouvernement de Bob Rae, quand on a fait le processus de consultation sur la Constitution dans le comité Silipo, sur lequel je siégeais comme vice-président, c'était tout bilingue. C'était garanti ; c'était fait sans y penser. Quand n'importe quel gouvernement provincial jusqu'à date envoyait une information aux citoyens, ils se sont assurés toujours, particulièrement dans les régions désignées, que le dépliant était envoyé en anglais comme en français. Puis vous dites que ce n'est pas possible.

Je vous donne ici un document que j'ai eu de Charles Bigenwald, the Ontario Speaks consultation secrétariat, un mémo daté le 21 novembre 1997. Il nous explique en anglais, parce qu'il ne nous le donne pas en français, hein — on veut avoir ça en français mais il nous l'envoie en anglais — la raison pour laquelle les francophones de la province n'ont pas eu leur information en français, seulement en anglais. "Why did you not print bilingual brochures?" Ça, c'est la question. Écoute, il faut que je vous la lise en anglais parce qu'il ne m'a pas donné une copie en français.

"Why did you not print bilingual brochures?"

"The Ontario Speaks brochure is not bilingual because we felt it was important to keep the costs of this consultation process as low as possible."

Interjection: That's what it's all about.

Mr Bisson : On sait ce que ça veut dire. Ça veut dire ce qu'on pense de nous autres, les francophones.

Premièrement, vous n'avez rien à me dire, Monsieur Gilchrist. On connaît vos attitudes déjà. Ne commencez pas avec moi, là.

Mais le point que je fais, c'est simplement celui-ci. Vous me dites, «Fie-toi à moi», Monsieur le député, «Fie-toi à moi», Monsieur le procureur général de la province de l'Ontario, puis le reste le l'Assemblée, «parce que nous autres, on va garantir des ententes», et vous savez que le gouvernement provincial, eux autres disent : «Pas de problème. On est là. On va vous garantir — » Mais quand on se fait envoyer des réponses comme ça par vos propres ministères, par vos propres bureaucrates, donner des ordres par votre gouvernement, qui a fait la décision ?

C'est un bureaucrate quelque part à l'intérieur du ministère, c'est quelqu'un qui est nommé par Mike Harris à travers M^{me} Cunningham, qui est responsable de votre processus Ontario Speaks. Puis lui, il m'a envoyé une réponse en anglais qui me dit que la raison pour laquelle on n'a pas envoyé les affaires en français, c'est simplement : «The Ontario Speaks brochure is not bilingual because we felt it was important to keep the costs of this consultation process as low as possible.»

Combien d'autres lettres comme ça est-ce qu'on va recevoir après que vous commencerez à transférer des services aux municipalités ? Combien de fois est-ce qu'on va se faire dire dans les régions désignées : «On ne vous donne pas les services en français parce que ça nous coûte trop d'argent» ? Moi, je sais ce qui va arriver. On comprend comment les municipalités, qui ont besoin de gérer leurs affaires, ne vont pas avoir l'argent.

Je vous donne, par exemple, la ville de Timmins, la communauté d'où je viens. Je regarde ici les chiffres du «downloading», du processus Qui fait quoi. Je regarde les coûts de transfert. Une fois que la province aura donné à la municipalité l'argent de l'éducation, l'évaluation foncière, les taxes municipales sur l'éducation, et une fois que la province aura transféré tous les services, comme le bien-être social, comme child care, comme la santé publique, comme les ambulances, comme le logement et j'en passe, c'est 10 \$ millions de dollars qu'on pare à nous autres. Ce n'est pas revenue-neutral. Après ça, on pare tous nos octrois provinciaux pour 7 \$ millions de plus ; en tout, 14,7 \$ millions que la ville de Timmins va perdre une fois que tous les transferts seront faits.

Le gouvernement dit : «Écoute. Ça ne va vous coûter rien, parce que cette année on va vous donner un cheque. Si vous coupez la ville de Timmins par 1,2 \$ millions puis vous faites ce que Mike Harris vous demande, si vous êtes de bons conseillers et de bonnes conseillères, on va vous donner un chèque pour 14 \$ millions pour la première année pour vous rassurer qu'il n'y aura pas une augmentation de taxes.»

Mais dans la deuxième année et la troisième année et la quatrième année, qu'est-ce qui va arriver ? La ville de Timmins va être privée de combien ? De 14,7 \$ millions qu'ils vont perdre. Et vous dites qu'on n'a pas besoin de s'inquiéter.

Qu'est-ce qui va arriver si une municipalité vient dire : «Écoute, le gouvernement provincial, on sait qu'on a signé des ententes, mais vous avez ôté 14 \$ millions. On ne peut pas se permettre de payer ces services. Vous l'avez dit dans vos propres documents provinciaux : "We felt it was important to keep the costs of this consultation process as low as possible"»? Donc, il n'y a rien en français. C'est ça qui va arriver.

C'est pour ça qu'on a présentement dans la province une loi, la Loi sur les services en français, qui n'est pas parfaite ; on n'a pas dit qu'elle est parfaite, mais c'est mieux que rien. C'est pour cette raison qu'on veut avoir un amendement dans votre loi qui garantit que ces services en français vont être respectés. Mais vous ne me croyez pas si vous dites : «Non, c'est Gilles Bisson qui parle.

C'est Gilles Bisson du NPD qui dit encore qu'il y a un problème. Nous autres, le gouvernement de Harris, on va bien faire» —

Rita Burak : un autre mémo qui a été envoyé en anglais parce qu'on ne fait rien en français ici en Ontario. Tous les documents sont encore écrits en anglais. C'est un document daté le 26 août 1997. Elle écrit une lettre à tous les sous-députés ministres de la province, parce ces sous-députés ministres-là sont inquiets avec ce qui peut arriver avec le Qui fait quoi. On va dire, «Moi, je suis le sous-ministre du bien-être social provincial. Quand on transfère tous ces services aux municipalités, qui va nous assurer que les services en français vont être donnés?» La personne responsable du logement au ministère du Logement, le sous-ministre, va demander la même question : «Écoute. Présentement la Loi sur les services en français dit que je dois donner des services en français dans les régions désignées.» Puis je lui demande, comment est-ce qu'on va s'arranger une fois que le Qui fait quoi sera tout fait ?

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Elle a écrit une lettre, une réponse à cette question, M^{me} Rita Burak — on connaît M^{me} Burak. Elle travaille au bureau du cabinet. Le cabinet, c'est qui ? «On est des cons. Le cabinet, ce n'est pas Mike Harris.» Ils vont me dire la prochaine affaire : «C'est pas nous autres.» Ils sont toujours prêts à me dire : «C'est ne pas nous autres.» Le cabinet, la dernière fois que j'ai vérifié, c'est bien ça. C'est le gouvernement de Mike Harris. Puis Rita Burak, qui est la secrétaire du cabinet, écrit cette lettre à tous les sous-députés ministres, puis c'est encore en anglais. Il faut la lire en anglais parce qu'il n'y a rien en français. Ça dit :

“Over the past few months, several ministries have inquired about the availability of services in French when services currently provided by the Ontario government are transferred to municipalities.”

Les sous-députés ministres se posent la question : «Qu'est-ce qui va arriver après que le Qui fait quoi sera fait ?» Bien, la lettre continue :

“The government has recently decided that the provision of services in French in the transfer of services to the municipalities should be determined on a program-by-program basis.”

Ça ne dit plus que j'ai une garantie législative. Ce que cela me dit, c'est qu'il y a une discussion au cabinet. Les ministres du gouvernement de Mike Harris ont été au cabinet puis ils ont eu une discussion et ils se sont posé la même question : «Une fois qu'on transfère tous les services à la municipalité, a-t-on besoin de s'assurer que les services en français sont donnés ?» Ils se sont posé la question.

Puis le cabinet, eux qui ont pris la décision, oui, M. Mike Harris, M. le procureur général, M. Eves et toute la gang, les conservateurs — on les connaît tous — ont dit, «On va prendre une décision,» et la décision est que tous les services en français donnés par la province de l'Ontario vont être déterminés programme par programme. Cela ne veut pas dire sous les ententes de la Loi 8. Ça dit «programme par programme». Puis vous

demandez, Monsieur le procureur général, pourquoi on est inquiets. C'est bien simple. On est inquiets de vos propres mots, du mot de Rita Burak, la secrétaire du cabinet, des mots de M. Thomson, qui se trouve le sous-ministre de la Justice, sous-procureur général du Canada, et ça ne finit pas là. Il y en a d'autres. On continue.

Le rapport du Commissaire aux langues officielles a fait de l'ouvrage sur cette question. Quand le procureur a fini son rapport, il avait ça à dire : «Deuxièmement, les garanties prévues par la Loi sur les services en français ne s'appliquent pas aux municipalités» — lui, il reconnaît le problème — «qui prendraient en charge les fonctions d'administration des tribunaux aux termes du projet de loi 108.

«Nous sommes d'avis que ces préoccupations illustrent le danger que présente, en l'absence de l'article 30, une sous-délégation de responsabilités aux termes...», que ça fait arriver un problème.

Le rapport finit en disant qu'eux-autres ont les mêmes préoccupations. J'ai trouvé la partie tout à l'heure quand le ministre était en train de parler, mais on arrive à la même conclusion. Même le Commissaire aux langues officielles se posé la question : une fois qu'on transfère ces services, puis on met ça dans une entente à la place de le mettre dans la loi, quelle garantie la communauté francophone a-t-elle que les services en français vont être respectés ? Il n'y en a aucune, parce que cette entente-là peut être renégociée. C'est ça le point.

Trois ans d'à cette heure, quand la municipalité de Timmins, Sault Sainte-Marie, Toronto, Ottawa, Windsor ou n'importe quelle se trouve dans une situation, ils auront recours à leur budget municipal à cause des coupures des transferts de la province de l'Ontario et rien ne les empêchera de venir ici à l'Assemblée pour dire au gouvernement du jour, et c'est Mike Harris : «On veut être capables d'ôter ça de nos ententes. On veut l'ôter. Pourquoi? Parce que ça nous coûte trop d'argent,» puis dans les mots du gouvernement dans leurs rapports, «Ça coûte trop d'argent. On veut trouver quelque chose de moins cher à faire.»

Et là, ce qui va arriver, une entente va être signée par les bureaucrates, sous la direction de Mike Harris ou du ministre responsable, et personne ne va en savoir un mot, pas un mot, jusqu'au moment où un francophone va se pointer vers des services, puis on lui dira : «No. We don't speak French here. Speak English.» C'est ça qu'on va se faire dire.

À ce point-là, il va y avoir rien qu'on pourra faire. Pourquoi? Parce que l'entente va être faite et on ne va pas avoir de protection sous la loi. On va être dans les mains de Mike Harris et de son gouvernement. Et ça, Monsieur le procureur général, c'est la raison pour laquelle on ne vous fait pas confiance.

The Chair : Questions and comments?

M. Lalonde : J'ai une question à adresser au procureur général. Il a mentionné que les municipalités pourront négocier — the point that you brought up, I'm pretty sure I heard this: Did you say the government will negotiate a

deal with the municipalities? Is that what you said a little while ago?

Hon Mr Harnick: What I said very specifically was that the issue of French-language services on the transfer of the provincial offences prosecutions to municipalities is not negotiable. We will have a memorandum of understanding, and the memorandum of understanding will very specifically say that existing French-language service standards will be adhered to.

We also know that the Courts of Justice Act provides for trials in the French language. I'm prepared to tell the honourable member that in addition, the MOU, the memorandum of understanding, will specifically provide for the continued use of French-language prosecutors, so there will be no need for translators. Anyone who wants a trial in French will have a trial in French. Pursuant to the Courts of Justice Act and pursuant to the memorandum of understanding, they will have a French-language prosecutor — not a translator; a French-language prosecutor. That will be provided for in the memorandum of understanding. That part of the memorandum of understanding is not negotiable.

If a municipality does not wish to enter into the agreement, they're not forced to enter into the agreement. This is totally voluntary. What they will get in the end is a chance to share in the revenues that are created under the provincial offences system. They will then obtain or be the beneficiaries of the revenue. There is absolutely nothing to compel a municipality, but if a municipality wants to become involved in prosecution under the Provincial Offences Act and take over those prosecutions, they must adhere to the memorandum of understanding, and it is non-negotiable about the fact that existing French-language rights will be adhered to. The Courts of Justice Act provides that there will be trials in French. That isn't being taken away. In addition, French-language prosecutors will be provided. This is not a cost to municipalities, because it comes out of the revenues provided by the Provincial Offences Act.

I listened to my NDP colleague in terms of the arguments he put forth. He didn't deal with the memorandum that I have told him is going to be the reality in this situation. He also didn't deal with the fact that in this particular area, the level of guarantees of French-language services is significantly higher. They are 100% guaranteed, unlike when the parking ticket issue was transferred by the former government to municipalities, where there was not a single guarantee of French-language rights in that devolution legislation; I think it was called Bill 25 at that time.

Certainly, this aspect of the MOU is non-negotiable. These services will be guaranteed. I say to my Liberal colleague, if you take a look at the proposed amendment, what you see in the proposed amendment if this amendment is passed is a lesser standard of French-language services than that which will be guaranteed under the memorandum of understanding.

Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming): If, as the Attorney General states, some municipalities may find that

it would not be cost-beneficial to enter into such an agreement with the province, then what happens with the net revenue that has been estimated in the downloading exercise here? You've estimated for different municipalities that they might receive a certain net revenue by taking on this responsibility. If they choose not to take on this responsibility, what happens with this potential net revenue?

Hon Mr Harnick: My understanding is that the province will continue to perform the prosecutions, and the revenue in areas that the province continues to prosecute in will continue to flow to the province.

Mr Ramsay: This estimated net revenue is quite substantial for many municipalities. Since this net revenue has been calculated in the difference in this offloading exercise, saying that the municipalities might be able to generate this to help make up for some of the deficiencies in the general support grant they would have been getting, is the province going to make up the difference in their support grants to the municipalities if these municipalities choose not to get into this business of the administration of justice?

Hon Mr Harnick: The overall calculations in terms of Who Does What have provided for that eventuality. We don't anticipate that municipalities are not going to want to avail themselves of the opportunity to take over the provincial offences prosecutions.

One of the things we have been doing as a ministry in the last almost one year is speaking to municipalities around the province. There has not been one that has indicated they are not interested in taking up the offer to become involved in the provincial offences prosecutions.

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I think that is a very hypothetical question that we see no indication of happening, but there's no question that in terms of the overall calculation of the Who Does What we have provided for that eventuality. Our discussions so far have indicated that there's no likelihood of that taking place. Municipalities are very anxious to become involved in the prosecution of these offences and they are also very willing to take on the non-negotiable aspects of the memorandum of understanding.

I think this is a situation that is very beneficial to municipalities. It ends the duplication of service, where some prosecutions now are done by the municipality, some are done by the province. Where offices are split, they can now be consolidated.

Certainly, as I've indicated, the aspects pertaining to the French language are not negotiable and guarantee a very high level of French-language services, right down to the guarantee that prosecutors will prosecute in the French language.

Mr Ramsay: Attorney General, I'm looking at the downloading sheet for the community reinvestment fund for next year for the particular township I live in, Casey township in the south part of Timiskaming district. We have a population of about 477 people. The estimate here for provincial offences net revenue is \$3,000. I used to be the bylaw officer there and I rarely saw any income or any

revenue. They are pretty good people there. We don't have very many bylaws and provincial offences just don't seem to occur. There really isn't the enforcement out there, anyway, by the provincial police or ourselves for that.

I notice that for the town of Cobalt, which has eight times the population, it's a \$7,000 estimate. I'm just wondering how we have such a high estimate of revenue of \$3,000 for such a little township such as Casey, of 477 people. How is this going to work and what expense would they have to get into to generate this to take their share of court administration?

Hon Mr Harnick: The revenue is based on historical data. The member raises a very good point in talking about smaller municipalities and the impact on them of running, for instance, a prosecution service in a community with 400-odd people. That's why the legislation provides for municipalities to be able to get together and run a system of provincial offences courts together, with more than one municipality being involved in the process. Over the course of the past year we've had negotiations with a number of municipalities which are interested in proceeding on that basis. We have provided for that eventuality. The bottom line is, if it's not viable for a municipality to do it, if they can't make an arrangement with neighbouring municipalities to do it together, the province will be happy to continue to do it.

M. Lalonde : Je ne peux pas voir pourquoi nous ne pourrions pas inclure dans le projet de loi que ce service français est garanti. Il y a certainement des inquiétudes envers le gouvernement, pourquoi on ne peut pas l'insérer. Je regarde ici, comme mon copain vient de me le dire, les revenus, «provincial offence net revenue». Pour Prescott et Russell on prédit que nous allons chercher 442 000 \$. Je ne sais pas à quel endroit on a pris ces chiffres-là ; je crois qu'ils ont été gonflés.

On a définitivement raison d'être inquiets. Mon collègue de Cochrane-Sud a mentionné tout à l'heure la brochure La parole est aux Ontariens — Ontario Speaks, in English. Lorsqu'elle a été distribuée, immédiatement les téléphones dans nos bureaux n'arrêtaient pas de sonner. Nous avons immédiatement communiqué avec le bureau ici à Toronto et ils nous ont dit : «Bien, c'est la députée de votre bout qui nous a dit de faire parvenir ça en anglais.» Quelle erreur qu'ils ont faite. La personne de Hawkesbury qui m'a appelé — j'ai immédiatement appelé le 1-800 pour voir si c'était vraiment ça. La réponse qu'on m'a donnée, c'est : «L'imprimeur a fait une erreur.» Au cas que la personne ne le sait pas, j'ai été 34 ans dans l'imprimerie et je savais qu'un imprimeur ne peut pas faire une erreur semblable. Nous savons, lorsque nous désignons 23 régions bilingues, qu'on doit donner les services dans les deux langues ; en Ontario 23 régions. On ne peut plus maintenant se fier des noms. Je connais des collègues dans Cornwall, Lalonde, qui ne disent pas un mot en français. Je connais d'autres collègues, des Jennings, qui ne disent pas un mot en anglais. Donc, pourquoi ne pas procéder avec l'impression dans les deux langues ?

Nous avons fait parvenir toutes ces brochures strictement en anglais. Les gens n'ont pas voulu communiquer immédiatement avec le bureau de la province, mais c'est une

brochure qui était très importante. Nous avons jusqu'au 15 décembre, aujourd'hui, pour remettre ces formulaires. Mais seulement environ 10 % vont l'avoir fait parvenir. La semaine dernière on a décidé de faire une autre distribution seulement en français à tout le monde ; la première fois c'était seulement en anglais. Maintenant, nous avons des appels d'anglophones nous disant : «Comment est-ce que ça se fait que vous nous faites parvenir de la documentation seulement en français ?» Cela veut dire que dans les régions désignées, nous devons donner les services dans deux langues, en français et en anglais, non seulement en français et non seulement en anglais.

Donc, chaque fois que nous voyons des projets de loi de la sorte, ça inquiète les francophones. Je regarde les services de la Sûreté provinciale. Nous savons que dans les régions désignées actuellement il est très difficile dans un secteur d'avoir des policiers bilingues, des agents bilingues. Nous essayons de faire des progrès, mais de temps à autre nous voyons que nous prenons des officiers d'autres régions et que nous les amenons dans notre région uniquement anglophone.

Je regarde le service ambulancier, un service de très grande importance. Encore là, je regarde la section de Casselman et Embrum. Casselman est d'environ 85 % francophone, et encore là très souvent nous avons les ambulanciers qui ne disent pas un mot français. Aujourd'hui on essaie de nous dire : «On vous garantit les services en français avec le projet de loi 108 pour les contraventions, les apparitions devant la justice et tout ça.» Est-ce que nous allons le croire ? Tant et aussi longtemps que nous n'aurons pas cet item, le droit garanti dans ce projet de loi, non, je ne le croirai pas.

Nous avons fait référence à l'hôpital Montfort, et comme je l'ai dit, nous avons été faire l'étude dans le bout de Lanark et Renfrew. Je sais que mon collègue M. Jordan de Lanark et Renfrew et moi, on a une partie de la population très mince, très faible de francophones. Pourquoi aller faire une étude dans le bout de Lanark quand on dit que c'est au bout de l'est de l'Ontario ? Encore une fois des erreurs, des erreurs, des erreurs.

Je regarde maintenant le service d'éducation et c'est la même chose actuellement, et le service hospitalier, et le service de santé. Nous savons qu'à Ottawa on parle de fermer l'hôpital Montfort. Heureusement il est encore ouvert, mais les gens de Hawkesbury ou de la région de l'est ontarien qui ne parlent pas un mot anglais sont souvent sur des listes d'attente de trois et quatre mois. Où devons-nous aller ? On doit se rendre à Montréal pour aller chercher des services hospitaliers. Donc, encore une fois, est-ce que nous allons garantir ou continuer à garantir des services de santé aussi bien que dans le domaine de la justice ? Encore une fois je suis très, très inquiet.

Je crois qu'il y a non seulement moi qui est inquiet, mais tous les francophones de la province, lorsqu'on voit que l'Association des juristes de l'Ontario nous fait parvenir une lettre — ce sont des avocats — lorsqu'ils savent qu'eux doivent défendre les cas devant la justice et ils s'aperçoivent que les officiers ou les contraventions sont données seulement en anglais, et eux après ça doivent agir comme interprètes.

Donc, encore une fois ce sont les raisons pourquoi nous sommes toujours inquiets.

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Je vais laisser ma place à d'autres.

To the Attorney General, I would just like to make sure that within the bill we give the guarantee to the francophones of Ontario. Without having this paragraph in there that language rights are guaranteed for all francophones of Ontario, I just don't believe you will respect the francophones of this province.

The Chair: Further questions and comments?

Mr Wayne Lessard (Windsor-Riverside): Bill 108 was one of those bills that was introduced back in January of this year. That was done before my arrival here at Queen's Park in September, so I'm not all that familiar with what led up to the introduction of this bill. However, I can speak as a lawyer and as somebody who has done prosecutions with the city of Windsor with respect to bylaws. I'm sure that in the city of Windsor, being able to prosecute some provincial offences is probably of some interest as well.

The member for Prescott and Russell made comments with respect to a number of people who he felt had some concern that they weren't going to be guaranteed having services in French if these prosecutions are done at the municipal level of provincial offences. He mentioned there are a great number of people who share that concern. I have letters from many of them that I'd like to refer to as well, because a number of people are concerned about their ability to receive services according to the French Language Services Act of Ontario.

One of these letters is from J.A. Tory Colvin, who is a lawyer in the city of London. He wrote to Marion Boyd, one of my fellow caucus members. He says as follows:

"I write as southwestern area representative of the Association des juristes d'expression française de l'Ontario.

"May I respectfully draw your attention to a problem that arises from Bill 108.

"As you are aware, London and Middlesex will be designated as a bilingual area under the French Language Services Act as of July, 1997."

He wrote this letter, by the way, in March 1997, so that's a designation that has already taken place. I'm going back to the letter again:

"This means that a person will have the right to communicate in French with and receive available services in French from the offices of a government agency or institution. This includes the courts.

"By the Courts of Justice Act (Ontario) anyone charged with a provincial offence has the right to elect trial in the language of choice and to require that the prosecutor and the justice of the peace speak both official languages. Regrettably, Bill 108 does not guarantee that these language rights will be maintained.

"I respectfully ask you to raise this point and to ensure the citizens of London, of Ontario, and indeed all of Canada will continue to have access to the courts in the official language of their choice."

That's signed J.A. Tory Colvin.

This is a letter that's dated May 3, 1997. It's addressed to the Attorney General, the Honourable Charles Harnick who, I may say, like myself, is a graduate from the University of Windsor law school.

It says:

"Dear Mr Harnick:

"I am writing to you on behalf of our partnership to express our dismay that there is no provision in Bill 108 to ensure that French language rights are protected. The effect of the transfer of some provincial court procedures to municipalities will have the effect of denying francophone citizens of this province their previous entitlement to services in French and English pursuant to sections 125 and 126 of the Courts of Justice Act.

"We feel that any erosion of francophone judicial services is unjustified and unwise in the context of Canada's national unity. We urge you to amend Bill 108 and to include sections 125 and 126 of the Courts of Justice Act.

"Thank you for your consideration...."

That's signed by Dirk Derstine of Hicks, Block, Adams, Derstine. They're a law firm on Charles Street in the city of Toronto.

This is a letter also to the Attorney General. It's from Marc Duguay. He's a lawyer in the city of Toronto as well. It's dated May 5, 1997, and he states as follows:

"I am writing to express my concern with respect to provisions contained in Bill 108 which, as presently drafted, are a threat to the efforts over the last several years to entrench French-language services under provincial court jurisdiction.

"The progress Ontario has made in the last several years to provide French-language services both for the courts and in the administration of government services generally is a model for the rest of Canada to follow. To threaten the degree of goodwill and tolerance that has been built over the years by virtue of flawed legislation would be an irresponsible gesture of mismanagement of government authority.

"I do trust you will see fit to intervene and correct the bill to ensure that French-language services continue to be made available to Ontario's francophone minority. Ontario must continue to lead the way of tolerance and political maturity in the matter of French services.

"At this moment in our history, with our own country at stake, we need to unequivocally affirm our collective desire not to turn back the clock on the wonderful progress we have made."

As I indicated, that's a letter from Marc Duguay addressed to the Attorney General Charles Harnick.

This is a letter dated April 27, 1997. It's from Adjudication Services Ltd, addressed to Attorney General Charles Harnick as well. It reads as follows:

"In this delicate time in our country's history, there is no one issue more important than the guarantee of fundamental services to official language linguistic minority groups, in all provinces. As you are aware, beginning under the stewardship of the Honourable Roy

McMurtry, great strides have been made in Ontario to ensure French-language access to justice in civil and criminal matters. As a lawyer practising as a labour arbitrator, and formerly as the vice-chair of the Ontario Labour Relations Board, I have had many occasions to hear cases and write decisions in French. I can attest to the growing need for still greater services in this area.

"Bill 108, as it is presently drafted, poses a real threat to the progress made to date. It devolves to municipalities the administration of certain provincial court jurisdictions, with no requirement that French-language services be provided. This is wrong, very wrong, from the standpoint of equity and access to justice for Ontario's francophone minority. On a national scale, it is extremely unwise from a political standpoint, as it gives still more ammunition to those anti-federalist forces which glory in proof that Canada just doesn't work. Should Canada die, it will not be from one blow, but from a thousand small cuts.

"Please act now to correct this injustice and defuse a relatively low-profile issue before it becomes a high-profile issue in the hands of those who would divide us. Act now, most importantly, because it is the right thing to do, in keeping with established law and policy in Ontario."

That's signed by Michel Picher from Adjudication Services Ltd. But that's not all. There are many more letters of a similar nature that I will save for comments that I'll want to make later on this evening. I just want to make sure that I'm able to save my voice until that time later on this evening.

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I do recall that in the 1995 election campaign, and following, this was a government that said they wanted to have more direct representation, they wanted to give their members more opportunity to participate in the democratic process. They wanted to ensure that all members had a say in the legislative agenda that they were going to undertake. In fact, they changed the standing orders to ensure that independent members of this Legislature were going to have an opportunity to participate on committees and also to ask questions on occasion in the Legislature. They were going to give members of the opposition the opportunity to participate in debate as well. They spoke a good line at the time about making sure that the interests of minorities, and of minority opposition members for that matter, were going to be protected.

But during the time that I've been here, I really have been quite shocked by what I've seen as a deterioration of the democratic rights of members, especially opposition members. We saw it again today with the introduction of a time allocation motion that took a bill out of committee that had been referred to committee just last week. Now we as opposition members don't have an opportunity to move amendments with respect to that bill and in fact, because of the change of rules, we had limited time even to speak to the time allocation motion this afternoon.

It was bad enough that the government introduced the time allocation motion that they did this afternoon. We raised a point of order objecting to the manner in which

they're trying to restrict and inhibit our rights to participate in the democratic process. But it wasn't enough for the government to introduce that motion; they had to take up almost their full time with respect to their opportunity to debate and limited us to just a few short minutes to even respond to that time allocation motion.

We've seen things like that happen time and time again here, and when I hear people say they're concerned about their minority rights, especially the francophone community, and see the example that has been set by this government in their dealings with minorities, including opposition members in the Legislature and restricting our right to debate, in my submission those people have a genuine concern to be fearful of the erosion of their rights. That's why I want to ask the Attorney General, why is it that francophones should believe that their rights to be able to represent themselves, to defend their interests and to have their cases heard in French, why should they believe what the Attorney General has to say here when he says they have nothing to worry about, that their rights are going to be protected?

Hon Mr Harnick: Coming from a party that passed similar legislation to transfer the prosecution of parking tickets from the province to municipalities, I find it very strange that they would stand up and say that the guarantees we are offering in a document that will be a public document, the memorandum of understanding, that will guarantee existing levels of French-language service, that will guarantee the provision of French-language prosecutors, on top of the Courts of Justice Act that provides for trials in the French language, I find it very strange that they would criticize that kind of document that will be public, when they themselves passed legislation regarding parking tickets that didn't have a single, solitary guarantee for use of the French language and protection of French-language services of any kind.

Certainly I will say again that we intend that this document be a public document, that it will guarantee existing levels of French-language service — the Courts of Justice Act provides for trials in the French language — and that we will also provide in the memorandum of understanding for French-language prosecutors. I think that certainly guarantees the existing level of French-language service in every aspect of provincial offences prosecutions.

M. Bisson : Comme mon collègue M. Lessard vient juste de le dire, «Every time you say "Trust us," we get worried.» Le ministre se lève et dit, «Le gouvernement NPD, eux autres, dans le passé — en 1991 si je me rappelle bien — a transféré la responsabilité aux municipalités qui voulaient les avoir, pareil comme cette loi sur les billets de stationnement.» Puis il dit que le gouvernement NPD n'a pas donné de garantie législative aux francophones quand ça en vient à ces services. Portez votre écouteur; vous allez aimer ça. Monsieur le procureur, mettez votre écouteur. Écoutez-moi. On va vous prendre une autre fois en train de mentir dans l'Assemblée législative. Oh, excusez-moi. Il faut que j'ôte ce mot ; ce n'est pas acceptable à l'Assemblée législative.

Mais vous dites que nous, comme gouvernement, on n'avait pas donné de garanties.

Interjection.

M. Bisson: I withdraw.

Monsieur le procureur, vous avez dit que le gouvernement NPD n'avait donné aucune garantie législative aux francophones de la province de l'Ontario quand nous, on avait transféré certaines responsabilités aux municipalités. C'est faux.

En 1993, on a passé une loi ici à l'Assemblée législative, the Courts of Justice Act. Laissez-moi vous dire les garanties législatives que le gouvernement NPD a donné aux francophones de la province. Ce n'est pas comme vous avec des ententes. Les garanties législatives disent, «Une partie à une instance qui parle français a le droit d'exiger que l'instance soit instruite en tant qu'instance bilingue.»

«Les règles suivantes s'appliquent :

Ça, on l'a donné dans une loi.

«1. Les audiences que la partie précise sont présidées par un juge ou par un autre officiel de justice qui parle français et anglais.

Qu'est qu'on a dit ? Dans la loi, on a dit qu'on donne le droit aux francophones qui ont leurs cas devant les tribunaux, devant un juge qui parle français. Garantie législative numéro 1.

«2. Si une audience que la partie a précisée se tient devant un juge et un jury dans un secteur mentionné à l'annexe 1, le jury se compose de personnes qui parlent français et anglais.» Garantie législative numéro 2.

«3. Si une audience que la partie a précisée se tient sans jury, ou devant un jury dans un secteur mentionné dans l'annexe 1, les témoignages et observations présentés en français ou en anglais sont reçus, enregistrés et transcrits dans la langue dans laquelle ils sont présentés.

«4. Toute autre partie de l'audience peut être instruite en français si le juge ou l'autre officiel de justice qui préside est d'avis qu'il est possible de le faire.

«5. Le témoignage oral donné en français ou en anglais lors d'un interrogatoire hors de la présence du tribunal est reçu, enregistré et transcrit dans la langue dans laquelle il est donné,» et j'en passe.

La garantie législative a été mise en place. Oui, c'est vrai que le gouvernement de Bob Rae avait transféré aux municipalités l'habileté de faire la collecte des contraventions de stationnement. Puis, dans le temps on a fait l'erreur. Je suis le premier à l'admettre, puis je l'ai dit publiquement avant. Mais quand on a vu ce qui est arrivé — et le gouvernement était au courant — le gouvernement de Bob Rae a fait les changements législatifs qui étaient nécessaires pour garantir les services en français aux francophones qui se retrouvaient devant la cour.

Je reviens au point. Le procureur général dit : «Fiez-vous à moi. C'est moi, Charlie Harnick. C'est moi qui est en charge et je vous donne ces garanties. Ces garanties sont que les francophones seront bien traités par le gouvernement de Mike Harris.» Écoutez, je veux retourner à ce qu'on vous a dit.

Je regarde la lettre, comme je l'ai dit tout à l'heure, de M^{me} Burak, qui est la secrétaire du cabinet, qui a dû écrire une lettre en réponse à tous les députés et ministres de la province qui se posaient les mêmes questions que nous on s'est posées en ce qui a trait aux transferts des services de Qui fait quoi. Je lis la lettre encore. La lettre a été écrite pour quelle raison ? Parce que les sous-ministres de tous les ministères ont dit, «Une fois qu'on aura transféré tous les services aux municipalités, qui va s'assurer que les services en français seront donnés ?» Eux voulaient le savoir. Pourquoi ? Parce que présentement ces services sont garantis sous la Loi 8, et ils ont dit : «Nous autres, on veut le savoir. Allez-vous faire des amendements à la Loi 8 disant qu'une fois que vous aurez transféré les services provinciaux aux municipalités, les services en français seront garantis ?» Comment le gouvernement a-t-il réagi ? Le cabinet, dans la lettre donnée par le secrétaire du cabinet dit, «The government has recently decided that the provision of services in French in the transfer of service to municipalities should be determined on a program-by-program basis» — écrit en anglais toutefois. Ça nous dit que le gouvernement est préparé à faire des ententes avec les municipalités où il pense que ça va un peu chauffer. Possiblement, même après que des ententes aient été faites, deux, trois ans après, quand les municipalités n'ont pas l'argent pour payer, elles vont commencer à dire : «Écoute, on n'a pas l'argent. Mike, veux-tu renégocier notre entente pour qu'on puisse ôter ces provisions ?» Écoute, c'est ça qu'on craint.

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Mais vous n'avez pas besoin de me croire. Vous n'avez pas besoin de croire Gilles Bisson, député néo-démocrate de Cochrane-Sud. Non, non. Ne me prenez pas au mot. Mais connaissez-vous celui qui porte le nom de Commissaire aux langues officielles ? Savez-vous qui c'est ? C'est le commissaire qui est responsable de toute la question. Le commissaire, lui, quand il a traité cette question — parce que le gouvernement fédéral a transféré des responsabilités juridiques du fédéral aux provinces. Dans ces transferts, il y a eu les mêmes questions qui ont été posées. Qu'arrive-t-il aux tribunaux qui sont présentement garantis en français quand ils sont transférés aux municipalités ? On veut dire comme au Manitoba, en Colombie-Britannique ou au Yukon où, possiblement, il n'y pas les provisions comme nous on a ici dans la province de l'Ontario. De quelle manière va-t-on respecter les services en français ?

Mais le gouvernement fédéral essaie de faire des ententes. C'est ça que le Commissaire aux langues officielles avait à dire. À la fin de son rapport, il fait cinq recommandations. Ce sont les recommandations du Commissaire aux langues officielles envers cette question exacte qu'on traite aujourd'hui à l'Assemblée. Au numéro 4, il dit : «Que le ministère de la Justice s'assure que tout accord conclu par lui conformément à la Loi sur les contraventions...» — ça veut dire, en d'autres mots, que quand on transfère des services, on a besoin de donner des garanties dans la loi. — «...renferme une disposition prévoyant que toute sous-délégation nécessitera son

approbation et contienne une clause générale de protection des droits linguistiques.» Il ne dit pas «une entente». Non. Il dit quoi ? Il dit «une clause». C'est quoi une clause ? Une clause, c'est un projet de loi. C'est comme l'amendement qu'on a déposé aujourd'hui, le Nouveau Parti démocratique au gouvernement conservateur. On ne dit pas qu'on veut avoir une entente ; on dit qu'on veut avoir une clause. Pourquoi ? Parce qu'on sait qu'une fois que ce n'est pas dans la loi, c'est très possible que nous, les francophones, perdions certains droits.

Il dit encore, au cinquième point — c'est encore le Commissaire aux langues officielles qui a traité de la question du transfert des services juridiques à un autre palier de gouvernement — «que le ministère de la Justice, dans le contexte de la mise en œuvre de la Loi sur les contraventions, établisse le mécanisme de contrôle» — et je continue — «d'imputabilité et de recours afin d'assurer le respect complet des lois linguistiques découlant du Code criminel.»

Qu'est-ce que ça veut dire en français simple ? Ça veut dire non seulement que tu as besoin de mettre une clause dans la loi mais que tu as besoin d'assurer aux francophones — si une décision a été prise qui était contre mes droits, m'assurer que j'ai un mécanisme qui est là pour pouvoir faire ma plainte devant le ministre ou dans n'importe quelle situation pour pouvoir amener ma cause devant lui.

C'est pour cette raison — je le dis encore — que le procureur général est parti tout de suite quand on a sorti la loi et qu'on a montré qu'il était encore un peu confus. Il s'est sauvé de la Chambre. Mais la situation est que vous, avec la Loi 108, allez donner aux municipalités certains pouvoirs que les cours provinciales présententement traitent comme les contraventions locales. Avec ça, vous dites : «Ne vous inquiétez pas. Si on transfère des services de la cour provinciale et on les donne aux municipalités, nous, le gouvernement de Mike Harris, on va signer des ententes pour garantir que les services en français soient respectés.»

Nous, au Nouveau Parti démocratique, disons : «Non, ce n'est pas assez. Tu ne peux pas le mettre seulement dans une entente, parce qu'une entente n'a pas le même poids qu'une loi. Une entente est seulement ça. C'est très possible qu'une entente puisse être changée à une autre date plus loin. Là, qu'arrivera-t-il ? Nos droits de nous autres vont être partis et on n'aura aucun recours, comme citoyens de la province, de pouvoir dire dans notre province : «Écoute, mes droits linguistiques n'ont pas été respectés.» Ils vont dire, «Tu n'as pas de droits linguistiques.» Ils vont dire, «La Loi 8 a dit, "Les services en français sont seulement garantis avec les services provinciaux dans les régions désignées. Ce n'est pas la province qui fait ça. C'est la municipalité."» On n'a pas de juridiction avec les services municipaux car vous n'avez pas de droits sous la loi.

C'est le même point que le Commissaire aux langues officielles a fait. C'est le même point que Rita Burak, la secrétaire du cabinet, a fait. C'est le même point que M. Thomson a fait. Vous connaissez George Thomson.

C'était notre ancien sous-ministre de la Justice en 1991 et à présent le sous-ministre de la Justice fédéral. Il a dit, et je répète une autre fois, que ce n'est pas Gilles Bisson qui a inventé ça. C'est lui. Il écrit une lettre et il dit : «Par contre, il est vrai que ce projet de loi pourrait indirectement permettre aux municipalités d'utiliser des procureurs unilingues.»

Écoutez, c'est George Thomson, qui était l'ancien sous-ministre au ministère du procureur, et qui est à présent le sous-ministre de la Justice, le sous-procureur général du Canada. Il a les mêmes craintes que moi. Il est tout possible que le point que Gilles Bisson du NPD soulève est vraiment basé sur une crainte réelle.

On vous dit : «C'est bien simple. Nous, les francophones aimerions avoir plus de services. On sait que le gouvernement de Mike Harris n'est pas dans le game. Ils ne sont pas intéressés à donner des services en français.» On vous demande seulement une affaire et c'est très simple. On vous dit : «On ne demande pas plus. On demande simplement que vous nous donniez les garanties législatives qu'on a à présent ; que quand vous transférez des services de la province aux municipalités, nos droits sont garantis dans la loi et non des ententes, parce qu'on a très peur qu'à la fin de la journée on va se faire passer un sapin, comme on dit en français.» C'est très simple.

Pour vous donner un exemple de ce qui est arrivé en Ontario dans une situation avant que, ou qui peut arriver même avec la situation que défoule, en 1991, quand on a transféré la responsabilité des amendes de stationnement aux municipalités, il y a eu deux plaintes devant les cours. Il y a eu une plainte à Toronto et une plainte à Penetang. Les plaintes ont été basées comme quoi ? C'était du monde à qui on avait refusé de donner des services tribunaux en français quand ils l'ont demandé, et pourquoi ? Quand la loi a été changée, l'amendement nécessaire pour garantir les services en français quand ces services-là sont transférés, n'était pas là. Nous l'avons manqué complètement.

Okay, on allait l'arranger après puis vous allez me l'expliquer, mais quand cette affaire est arrivée les juges ont dit : «Dis donc, on n'est pas capable d'entendre votre plainte en français. Pourquoi ? Parce que ceux qui sont responsables pour nos cours disent, "Écoute, on ne veut pas donner ces services en français. Les municipalités nous disent, les personnes qui paient le fardeau et qui paient tout faisant affaire avec des services, pour les services municipaux, nous disent de ne pas donner des services en français quand ça en vient aux cours."» Et pour cette raison, nous avons trouvé qu'on avait fait une erreur dans la loi, et le gouvernement NPD est revenu avec un amendement, avec the Courts of Justice Act, des tribunaux judiciaires, pour être capable de garantir les droits dont les francophones avaient besoin quand le transfert des services est venu.

Tout ce qu'on vous demande c'est simplement de faire de même. Faites ce que le gouvernement NDP a fait. Le gouvernement NPD a transféré ces services pour les amendes aux municipalités, mais dans le bon temps ce qu'on a fait, on a transféré nos droits dans la loi. On a dit

qu'il y a des garanties sous la loi que les francophones peuvent demander les services en français aux cours ; qu'ils peuvent avoir leur procès fait en français ; qu'ils n'ont pas besoin de s'inquiéter que les services vont être donnés autrement. On l'a mis dans les lois elles-mêmes.

Je vous demande une autre fois : Pour quelle raison, Monsieur le procureur général, ne voulez-vous pas donner les mêmes garanties dans la loi que le gouvernement de Bob Rae a donné aux francophones en 1991 ? Je veux demander une question au procureur général. Je demande au procureur général pour quelle raison il n'est pas capable de donner les garanties législatives qu'on demande dans la loi ? Pourquoi pas les mettre dans la loi à la place d'une entente ? Vous comprenez ? Vous avez votre écouteur. Je vais le dire une autre fois : Pour quelle raison ne voulez-vous pas donner aux francophones les garanties législatives quand ça en vient aux transferts au lieu de les mettre dans une entente ? Dites-moi la raison.

The Chair: Attorney General, do you want to answer?
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Hon Mr Harnick: We have indicated that a memorandum of understanding that is a public document, which indicates that these things are not negotiable, that provides a much greater level of service than the former government provided in these unknown amendments to the Courts of Justice Act, will be far more advantageous and will provide flexibility in ensuring that French-language services will be available. We will guarantee that the existing level of French-language services will be available, that French-language prosecutors will be available — not translators but French-language prosecutors — and also the guarantee in the Courts of Justice Act for trials in the French language continues to exist and certainly provides and ensures that the equivalent level of French-language services will be available.

As I told the honourable member earlier, if you take a look at the amendment he has provided, this amendment will limit and in fact provide less French-language service than what we are prepared to offer under the memorandum of understanding. Certainly, as I said before, we are prepared to guarantee existing levels of French-language service, guarantee trials in the French language under the Courts of Justice Act, and guarantee as well under the memorandum of understanding that there will be French-language prosecution service available — not French-language translation but French-language prosecutors — to provide the prosecution services.

What we are guaranteeing goes far beyond what the NDP government was prepared to provide when they changed the parking ticket legislation to allow municipalities to prosecute parking ticket offences. We have made these guarantees in a document that will be a public document, and there is no negotiation over these particular issues. These issues will be non-negotiable and no municipality will be forced to become the operator of the Provincial Offences Act in their municipality. This will not be something any municipality has to do. It's totally optional. They can do it on a voluntary basis. There is a revenue stream that comes with it so there is no cost

associated with it. What we are prepared to do in a non-negotiable memorandum of understanding section is to provide French-language services that go far beyond what the former government was prepared to provide in a very similar circumstance.

The First Deputy Chair (Mr Bert Johnson): Questions or comments?

M. Bisson : Encore, Monsieur le procureur général, je fais le point : vous continuez à dire que le gouvernement NPD n'a pas donné de garanties législatives aux francophones quand ça vient aux services en français devant les cours, mais c'est faux.

La Loi sur les tribunaux judiciaires — je l'ai ici — amendée en 1993, dit :

«Une partie à une instance qui parle français a le droit d'exiger que l'instance soit instruite en tant qu'instance bilingue.» Ça continue : «Les règles suivants s'appliquent» aux instances qui sont suivies en tant qu'instances bilingues.»

Alors, ne commencez pas à dire qu'il n'y a pas eu de garanties législatives ; il y en a eu.

Deuxièmement, et si vous ne le savez pas je suis bien surpris, on ne peut pas contourner une jurisprudence dans un contrat. C'est une des bases de la loi, et c'est pour cette raison qu'on donne des garanties législatives dans la loi elle-même. Si un cours —

Hon Mr Harnick: You don't know what you're talking about.

M. Bisson : C'est intéressant. Le procureur général dit que Gilles Bisson ne sait pas de quoi il parle. Okay. Ce n'est pas Gilles Bisson qui ne sait pas de quoi il parle. On va regarder.

Est-ce que le Commissaire aux langues officielles sait de quoi il parle ? Est-il un con, lui ? Il fait sa vie en regardant ce qui se passe avec les langues officielles dans le pays appelé le Canada, où on vit. Le Commissaire aux langues officielles, quand il regardait à cette question directement, a dit que quand le fédéral a transféré les services juridiques à la province, il avait besoin de s'assurer que les droits linguistiques sont mis dans des ententes légales faisant affaire avec le projet de loi, non dans une entente. Justement, le Commissaire aux langues officielles a dit que le ministre de la Justice renferme une disposition prévoyant que toute sous-délégation — ça veut dire tout le «downloading» — nécessitera son approbation et contient une clause générale de protection des droits linguistiques.

On ne parle pas d'une entente. On parle d'un changement dans la loi. Tu dis que je ne sais pas de quoi je parle, mais va t'asseoir avec le Commissaire aux langues officielles et ce sera M. Charlie Harnick qui ne comprend pas ce qui se passe dans la province de l'Ontario. Ce n'est pas seulement Gilles Bisson ; ce sont tous les avocats qui ont écrit, ceux que M. Lessard de Windsor-Riverside a lu dans le record tout à l'heure, qui disent les mêmes choses que moi. C'est aussi l'Association des juristes d'expression française de l'Ontario qui ont fait le même point. Donc, est-ce moi qui ne sais pas de quoi je parle ? Ce monde-là, ils font leur vie dans les cours de l'Ontario, où ils représentent les francophones, et ils disent que vous,

Monsieur le ministre, n'êtes pas bien dans l'affaire. Une fois que vous transférez ces services-là et que vous ne mettez pas la garantie dans la loi, les francophones vont perdre les droits acquis dans la loi. Ce n'est pas quelque chose qu'on peut faire seulement dans une entente.

Est-ce seulement moi, Gilles Bisson, qui fais ce point-là, Monsieur le procureur général, vous qui dites, «Vous ne savez pas de quoi vous parlez»? Ce n'est pas moi.

On va en lire une autre. Connaissiez-vous M. George Thomson? Vous vous rappelez de M. Thomson? M. Thomson est l'ancien sous-procureur général de l'Ontario en 1991, et présentement il est le sous-ministre de la Justice ou procureur général du Canada. Qu'est-ce qu'il dit, M. Thomson?

Personne ne connaît rien, excepté M. Charlie Harnick, mais M. Thomson dit, «Par contre, il est vrai que ce projet de loi pourrait indirectement permettre aux municipalités d'utiliser des procureurs unilingues,» exactement l'opposé de l'assignation que vous avez déposée ici dans la Chambre il y a à peine une heure.

Vous dites, «Ne vous inquiétez pas.» Moi, Charlie Harnick qui connaît tout, je suis si smart, je suis si voyant, ce sont tous les autres qui ne savent pas de quoi ils parlent.

Ah, non. L'Association des juristes d'expression française ne sait pas, le Commissaire aux langues officielles ne sait pas de quoi il parle. M. George Thomson, ancien sous-procureur de la province de l'Ontario et présentement sous-ministre de la Justice, sous-procureur général du Canada ne sait pas. Mais je n'ai pas fini. Ça continue.

Pourquoi les préoccupations? Parce qu'on sait que votre Cabinet a fait des décisions. Votre cabinet a décidé que, une fois que vous commencez le Qui fait quoi et que vous transférez tous les services de la province aux municipalités, vous n'allez pas donner les garanties législatives aux francophones que ces services provinciaux vont être respectés et donnés en français. Présentement, comme on le sait ici à l'Assemblée et comme on le sait à travers la province, si la province offre un service provincial dans un endroit désigné, le service doit être donné en français aussi. Mais une fois que la province commence à transférer tous ces services aux municipalités, ça tombe hors la loi. La loi ne s'applique pas. Pourquoi? Parce que la Loi sur les services en français dit que seulement les services provinciaux tombent sous la loi. Une fois que les services sont donnés aux municipalités, ils ne sont plus là.

M. Harnick se lève et dit, «Moi, Charlie Harnick, je connais tout. Personne d'autre n'y connaît rien.» C'est un gang de cons. Il n'y a que moi qui connaît la province.» C'est ça qu'il dit. Puis là il dit, «Fie-toi à moi. Moi et Mike Harris et Noble Villeneuve, nous sommes progressistes. Ah oui. Ayez confiance en nous autres. Nous allons vous assurer que tous vos services vont rester une fois transférés aux municipalités.» Bien, c'est qui, «moi»? C'est Gilles Bisson, seulement député neo-démocrate de Cochrane-Sud.

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Laissez-moi lire ce que M^{me} Rita Burak, la secrétaire du cabinet a dit. Je vais faire une traduction parce que la

lettre est écrite en anglais: «Les derniers mois j'ai reçu beaucoup d'appels des sous-ministres de tous les ministères de la province et ils se posent la question, une fois qu'on transfère tous les services aux municipalités, qu'est-ce qui va assurer que les services en français vont être donnés?» Elle a répondu et elle dit, «The government has recently decided that the provisions of services in French and the transfer of services to municipalities should be determined on a program-by-program basis.»

Cela ne peut pas dire qu'on a un droit législatif. Vous nous dites directement — il nous dit, «Bull,» Rita Burak, bull, le cabinet de l'Ontario, bull. Ce n'est pas Gilles Bisson qui est en train de l'inventer. C'est le mémo qu'elle a envoyé, la secrétaire du cabinet, nommée secrétaire du cabinet de Mike Harris, et elle dit: «Ce n'est pas une question que si on va respecter tous les services en français une fois que les services seront transférés aux municipalités. On va transférer des services puis on va déterminer, programme par programme, qui va avoir des services en français.

Je vous demande, Monsieur le procureur général, quand ça vient aux municipalités comme — mais vous vous rappelez, il y a eu des municipalités en 1987, 1988, 1989, dans ce coin-là, qui ont passé des motions disant: «Notre municipalité est unilingue.» Puis les municipalités qui sont déjà dans les zones désignées, qui ont passé ces motions, j'ai ici à peine 10 municipalités qui ont fait ces motions-là. On ne veut pas les nommer parce que c'est un peu embarrassant pour eux. Mais de toutes les municipalités qui sont à présent sous la protection de la Loi 8, dont la région est dans la région de la Loi 8, il y a une, deux, trois, quatre, cinq, six, sept, huit municipalités qui ont passé des motions disant qu'on est unilingue. On ne veut pas donner des services en français. On est contre. On ne va pas les donner. Comprenez, la province, si vous me donnez les services provinciaux, moi je ne les donne pas en français. Et vous demandez pourquoi nous sommes inquiets.

Monsieur le procureur général, on est inquiet parce qu'on sait d'où ce gouvernement vient. Je lis encore Ontario Speaks. Vous savez, c'est le processus sur l'entente Calgary. «Oh bien, oui, oui, oui,» dit le procureur général. Excusez-moi, ce sont vos mots, vous-même. Ce n'est pas moi qui suis en train d'inventer ces documents. Ce sont des documents de la province. Quand ça en vient à La parole est à l'Ontario: dialogue sur l'unité canadienne, le gouvernement de l'Ontario, pas comme dans le passé avec le gouvernement de Bob Rae ou également de Peterson, quand ces deux gouvernements précédents ont envoyé des dépliants ou l'information aux personnes qui demeurent en Ontario, ils ont envoyé ça dans ces régions et ils se sont assurés que ça a été donné en français et en anglais.

Qu'est-ce que ce gouvernement a fait? Dans mon bureau de comté j'ai dû avoir, je le gage, par jour en conséquence 20 à 25 téléphones par jour. Même la semaine passée j'ai reçu des téléphones là-dessus des francophones qui n'ont eu aucun service en français. Ce qui est arrivé, c'est que le gouvernement a envoyé à des

régions, désignées comme Timmins, seulement la copie en anglais d'Ontario Speaks, qui demande à la communauté ontarienne : «On veut vous consulter. On veut entendre ce que la population a à dire sur l'entente de Calgary.» Ils envoient dans une région comme la mienne, à Timmins, où bien près de 50 % de la population est francophone, dans la région de Iroquois Falls, où plus que la moitié est francophone, l'information seulement en anglais.

Le monde sont en beau maudit pour une bonne raison. Imagine-toi, tu demeures à Hearst et tu reçois quelque chose qui dit «Ontario Speaks» à Hearst ; 90 % du monde à Hearst sont francophones pure laine. Ce n'est pas une question qu'ils ne veulent pas lire l'anglais. Ils n'en sont pas capables, dans beaucoup de reprises, parce que c'est leur droit et leur choix d'être capable de vivre en français, ce qui est chose excellente.

Mais qu'est-ce que le gouvernement dit ? J'ai écrit une lettre disant au gouvernement, «Pourquoi envoyez-vous à un citoyen dans notre comté seulement de l'information en anglais ?» Je voulais le savoir. J'ai pensé que le gouvernement allait dire que c'était une erreur et que la traduction était à paraître. Je m'attendais à une excuse d'une manière ou une autre. Oh, non. Ils m'écrivent et ils disent en anglais, après que j'ai envoyé une lettre en français, ce qui est une autre histoire :

“The Ontario Speaks brochure is not bilingual because we felt it was important to keep the costs of this consultation process as low as possible.” Don't speak French in Ontario. C'est ça qu'il est en train de nous dire. Et vous demandez pourquoi on a peur, pourquoi on n'a pas confiance en vous à mettre vos ententes ? Parce que, par vos actions, vous avez démontré que vous ne respectez pas les services en français dans la province. Vous avez essayé, votre gouvernement, de fermer le seul hôpital francophone en Ontario, l'hôpital Montfort. Seulement après que la communauté a mis une pression énorme sur le gouvernement provincial et que certains députés de la région ont commencé à ressentir que possiblement, ce n'était pas une très bonne décision, on a commencé à retourner à l'affaire pour sauver l'hôpital Montfort. Mais vous autres voulez fermer. C'est le gouvernement conservateur de M. Harris lui-même.

On dit très simplement au gouvernement, on ne vous demande pas quelque chose d'extra dans cet amendement. On vous demande seulement de faire quelque chose très facile : Quand vous transférez les services aux municipalités, que vous mettez dans la législation, la loi 108, notre amendement, qui garantirait les services en français aux francophones une fois transférés. Si vous n'êtes pas préparés à le faire, cela me dit quoi ? Cela me dit que j'ai raison d'être inquiet. Si ça ne veut rien dire et que vous dites qu'avoir une entente est aussi bien qu'avoir un amendement à la loi, pourquoi ne pas mettre l'amendement à la loi ? C'est très simple. Je vous demande une autre fois, pour quelle raison ne voulez-vous pas nous donner les garanties législatives quand ça en vient aux services en français dans le transfert de cette loi ? Quelle raison en avez-vous contre ?

Hon Mr Harnick: I just want to talk about a couple of the things the member for Cochrane South has touched on.

First of all, I want to talk about the former NDP government's regime for parking tickets. We all know that parking tickets have been prosecuted municipally since probably the late 1980s. Bill 25 did not change the prosecution of parking tickets but it moved the court's administration for parking tickets into the municipal realm.

As a result, there has been a loss of French in areas of court services because the former government never guaranteed court services, over-the-counter assistance, for the public in the French language. There's also been considerable slippage of the use of bilingual forms.

I can tell you, Mr Chair, that we are protecting both court services and prosecution in the memorandum of understanding.

The other thing I'd like to do is refer the member for Cochrane South to subsection 162(3) of the bill. If he takes a look at subsection 162(3), it states very clearly, “Performance standards and sanctions shall be specified in the agreement; the municipality shall meet the standards and is subject to the sanctions for failure to meet them.”

Then in subsection (4) it says, “In subsection (3), ‘performance standards’ includes standards for the conduct of prosecutions, for the administration of the courts and for the provincial of court support services.”

So I tell you, Mr Chair, that we have guaranteed through the memorandum, as it's referred to in the act, French language services in courts in the French language, prosecutions by prosecutors in the French language, not with translation services, and we have taken the extra step of doing what the former government refused to do and that's guarantee services to the public who come to the court offices who need assistance. We've guaranteed that those services be available in the French language.

I think that while the opposition may want to talk about people who might be opposed to this, they never answer the question, that when the memorandum and the wording of the memorandum is the subject of those discussions and referenced in the act, that the guarantees of French services in the transfer of Part I prosecutions from the province to municipalities are guaranteed levels of French-language service at the highest level. The guarantees are there pursuant to the memorandum as referenced in the act and certainly go far beyond what the previous government did for the services available to the public in the French language.

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You can talk about a thousand and one other things, but if you want to talk about Bill 108 and if you want to level with the public who are watching, we are providing levels of French-language service and prosecutions in the French language that far exceed what the previous government was prepared to do for parking tickets.

I will also tell you that there are thousands and thousands of parking ticket infractions issued every day in the province of Ontario, and when any of those people who get a parking ticket go to a court office, there is no guarantee that they will be able to deal in the French language. In so far as the part I prosecutions we are dealing with are concerned, that guarantee is rock-solid,

as referenced in the memorandum and as referred to in the act.

When people become aware of the guarantees that will be available, they will be very satisfied that we have gone the extra mile, that we've guaranteed the services, that we've guaranteed the prosecutions which are guaranteed under the Courts of Justice Act, and also that we have also gone the extra distance by ensuring that prosecutors will be prosecuting in the French language. I would expect my colleagues on all sides of the House to support that and also to support and not hold up any longer the opportunity for municipalities to share in a significant stream of revenue.

We've reached the stage here where I've heard all the speeches. There has been nothing new said for the last almost two hours, and now it becomes very clear that those opposite me in the opposition benches don't want municipalities to have an opportunity to share in this revenue stream. We've guaranteed all the things they've asked for, all the protections for French-language services, for prosecutions, for French-language prosecutors. We've guaranteed that in the MOU, as referenced in section 162 of the bill.

It's time to get on with this and say to municipalities: "This is an opportunity for you. We know you will continue to provide the level of service that has been provided in the past. We can now get on with something that's good for the people in the province of Ontario, good for municipalities and good for the provincial government."

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur): I'd just ask the Attorney General a question which ties into that, into what the member for Timiskaming was talking about earlier in terms of municipalities having some assurance that indeed the revenues that have been projected for the municipalities are remotely accurate.

I've talked to a number of municipalities within the area I represent and in northwestern Ontario that feel the revenue projections are virtually plucked out of thin air. I was listening earlier and I heard you say that it was based on historical data. Having said that, there seems to be a conflict between the figures you've got in terms of what revenue generation there will be and what Mr Crombie thought there would be. I would be curious to know just exactly what those historical data are and how far back they go, and second, whether it was shared with the municipalities in advance of your simply dropping the figures on them last Friday.

That's a very important point that needs to be made. They don't believe that the revenue projections are accurate. There is certainly the whole question of what the member for Timiskaming talked about, that if it's a really small community, the administration costs and startup costs may not make it worthwhile doing. But it's more a question of getting a sense of where that historical data came from, how long they've been in place, and why there is a conflict between you and Mr Crombie.

Hon Mr Harnick: I can tell the member that we have that data from the Ministry of Finance. This is money that

has been going into the consolidated revenue fund. It's part of the public accounts. We have taken a look at the revenues that have been generated for provincial offences over the last several years. The amount of money that comes out of the court system for provincial offences and goes into the consolidated revenue fund is well known.

We're not asking any municipality that doesn't want to become involved in this to get involved in it. We're trying to make every accommodation for smaller municipalities by amalgamating with neighbouring townships, neighbouring municipalities, so that the economics of a bigger-scale operation can be available to those smaller entities, but no municipality must enter into this.

If a municipality isn't satisfied that there's a revenue stream there, they need not become involved in this. We have spoken to municipalities across the province. They're anxious to get involved in this because there is a revenue stream, and we think this is a very beneficial direction for municipalities to be going in. The reality is that they have the revenue stream, out of which their costs come. It doesn't cost them anything and there's a net benefit to them at the end of the day.

It's not a mandatory program but a voluntary program, voluntary in the sense that if a municipality elects to enter into the program, they've got to comply with the MOU. They have performance standards, as referenced in the act, that they have to comply with. Some of those performance standards include the provision of existing French-language services; French-language prosecutors being available, not translators; as well, we have the overriding protection of the Courts of Justice Act, which provides trials in the French language in Ontario.

The member can rest assured that if a municipality sees benefit in it, they can be involved in it, but they have to comply with the performance standards that are obligatory under the memorandum of understanding. If they don't want to get involved with it, they don't have to, but almost all the municipalities we've had an opportunity to speak with are very interested in becoming involved in this.

I'm sure the member's own municipality would be very interested in the opportunity to take over the provincial offences in his community. We're reducing duplication. The municipalities do part of it now; the province does part of it now. We will run a more efficient system and there will be a net benefit to the taxpayers in my friend's community. He can rest assured that performance standards will be adhered to and complied with. They become, as I said, a mandatory part of the transfer.

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): I realize I come into this discussion while it's already some way into this issue, but I think I have enough of the gist from following the debate on the television screen and also from knowing before coming in this evening the essence of the position the government was putting forward, which the minister has just reiterated, and knowing and agreeing very strongly with the view my colleague from Cochrane South has put forward about why this amendment he has moved is necessary.

I'm here to speak in support of that amendment. I've listened to some of the reassuring words the Attorney General has just given us. The problem I have with it is that at the end of the day, when you bring it right down to its basic position, what the Attorney General is doing is saying to us, "Trust us to continue to deliver on the protection of services in French across the province; trust us to do that through the memorandum of understanding" that he has referred to on more than one occasion.

2030

I for one am not prepared to trust the government to continue the protection of francophone rights in this province and the right of people across this province in the designated areas under Bill 8 to have those services provided in French. I'm not prepared to trust that to the decision-making on a day-to-day basis. I don't have anything against this particular minister or any other minister in this government, but I'm not prepared to have any minister in that position and I'm not prepared, quite frankly, to see this government in that position, particularly when we are dealing here with rights.

It's not a question of whether we trust ourselves as individuals. If you take rights which now are entrenched in law — and that's what we're talking about, rights that now are entrenched in law — what the government is saying to us is, "We will ensure that those rights continue to be delivered as these services are transferred down to the municipalities. We will ensure that those services continue to be protected through one or more memorandums of understanding that would be signed by municipalities which in this case would be interested in buying into this particular structure as set up under Bill 108." I am saying, and I know my colleague from Cochrane South has been saying, as many in the francophone community have been saying, "No, that's not the way it should be done."

On a maintenant une structure, une loi, la Loi 8, qui protège les droits des francophones en Ontario. On a une structure et une loi qui dit en effet que dans certaines parties de la province, là où selon le critère établi par la Loi 8 il y a la responsabilité de la part des structures provinciales d'offrir les services en français, il y a une protection qui existe depuis des années qui donne une protection et un droit aux Franco-Ontariens, à tous ceux qui s'expriment en français en Ontario qui disent, «Moi, je veux qu'on m'offre ce service ici en français.» C'est un droit qui existe dans les lois de la province.

Maintenant le gouvernement arrive et il dit, «On veut faire des changements.» Ici, ce soir, on discute d'une manière particulière la loi sur les infractions provinciales, et le gouvernement est en train de nous dire, «On veut changer la structure et on veut changer un peu la gestion de ces droits et on va protéger les droits des Franco-Ontariens à travers des ententes qu'on va conclure avec les municipalités, donc ça va donner la possibilité à ces municipalités d'exercer les fonctions de gestion et du soutien des tribunaux provinciaux.»

Le gouvernement est en train de nous dire qu'il va protéger le droit qui existe maintenant dans la loi ; il va protéger ce droit-là à travers ces ententes. Nous disons,

comme le disent plusieurs organisations franco-ontariens, que ce n'est pas suffisant de faire ça. S'il y a maintenant des droits qui sont protégés par la loi, et dans ce cas-ci c'est le droit d'aller devant un tribunal et d'avoir la situation réglée en français, on veut qu'on soit clair dans la loi, et non pas dans une entente, qu'on continue à avoir ce principe et ce droit protégés.

On peut rendre cette chose très compliquée, mais on peut aussi la réduire à une situation ayant une base très simple. C'est-à-dire, il y a maintenant des droits qui existent dans les lois de la province. Nous, on exige de la part de la communauté franco-ontarienne que ce droit continue à être protégé dans la loi, parce que pour changer la loi il faut du moins venir ici dans le Parlement d'Ontario.

Les ententes : le ministre aujourd'hui, un autre ministre demain peuvent les changer quand ils veulent. Il y a là une grande différence entre les droits qu'on a qui sont protégés dans la loi, qui selon nous devraient rester protégés par la loi, et la manière de laquelle le gouvernement est en train de nous dire maintenant, «Bon, nous voulons continuer à offrir ce droit.»

Je sais qu'on est ici ce soir où on a devant nous un projet de loi qui traite simplement — je ne veut pas dire «simplement» — la question des infractions provinciales, mais vous comprendrez sans doute la préoccupation de la communauté franco-ontarienne, des gens qui nous disent, «Si on réussit comme gouvernement à changer la protection qu'on a maintenant dans cette gamme de services ici, alors demain, un autre jour, on arrivera ici et on nous demandera de donner le pouvoir à un autre ministre de faire le même changement dans les autres secteurs de services. Le résultat sera que la protection qui existe aujourd'hui pour les Franco-Ontariens, donc tous les services qu'on a maintenant le droit de recevoir en français, peut disparaître.

Il y a ce concept, qui pour moi est très clair et très simple, de dire que s'il y a des droits aujourd'hui qui sont protégés par la loi, si l'intention du gouvernement est de changer ces protections-là, qu'ils aient le courage de venir devant le Parlement de l'Ontario et de nous dire clairement, «Oui, on veut changer ces protections.» Là, on peut discuter de ça. Ils ont une majorité et ils peuvent changer la loi s'ils veulent changer la loi.

Mais ce que je trouve désagréable, c'est que le gouvernement vient devant nous, devant le Parlement, et dit, «Non, nous ne voulons pas changer la protection, mais nous ne sommes pas prêts à continuer cette protection dans la loi.» C'est là la grande différence, parce que l'amendement que mon collègue de Cochrane-Sud a proposé en effet continuerait cette protection dans la loi. Nous, comme caucus néo-démocrate, disons que s'il existe maintenant des protections pour les communautés franco-ontariennes de la province, ces protections-là devraient continuer. N'importe quel niveau de gouvernement, que ce soit au niveau provincial ou au niveau provincial, seront là à offrir ces services. Ce n'est pas très compliqué comme concept. C'est vraiment très simple, vous voyez.

Ce qu'on trouve vraiment difficile à apprécier de notre part, et ce que la communauté franco-ontarienne, plus importante que nous, trouve très difficile à comprendre, c'est pourquoi le gouvernement, s'ils disent qu'ils veulent continuer la protection de ce service, du droit de recevoir ces services en français, continue à être opposé à un simple amendement qui continuerait cette protection dans la loi.

I find this flabbergasting. I know that my colleague from Cochrane South has engaged in this debate, particularly as our critic for francophone affairs, but has given us real leadership in this in terms of raising this, of showing the kind of lack of logic, to be kind to the government, that they have shown so far.

As I said, I bring this down to a very simple notion, which is that the Attorney General can stand up and read from clause after clause but he keeps referring back to this memorandum of understanding and he keeps telling us the rights of the francophone community here in this case, in terms of the rights of provincial infractions or the rights of them to deal in tribunals with questions having to do with provincial infractions, will be protected. How? They will be protected through these new memoranda of understanding.

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Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): And his assurance.

Mr Silipo: And his assurance. I never try to make politics personal, but I wouldn't take a personal assurance from any minister of this government. I would quite frankly think that people out there, when we're talking about such basic rights, should not take personal assurances from any minister of any government. But that's another discussion.

What we have here is an interesting change that's going on, because the government isn't coming forward and saying: "We want to change the law. We want to have a debate about whether the rights under Bill 8 should continue to be there and delivered in the same way." They're not saying that.

What they're coming forward with is, "We want to transfer some of these responsibilities on to the municipal level. By the way, we'll make sure the same rights for services in French are provided," and yet they want to quietly skate through the fact that the way in which they're proposing to protect those really leaves it entirely in their hands and in the agreements that they would enter into with municipalities as to whether or not those rights would continue to be protected.

When you have a fundamental right that is protected in law, why should anyone, in this case, the Franco-Ontarian community, settle for anything less than the same legal protection that they have now? Not the word of the Attorney General or Premier Mike Harris. God knows what you can do with the word of Premier Mike Harris these days.

It does raise some legitimate questions about why the Attorney General and the government find it so difficult to accept a simple, straightforward amendment which my colleague from Cochrane South has proposed, which

essentially says: "You want to transfer some services from the provincial level to the municipal level? Fine, we can disagree with you on whether you should do that or not, but once you've made the decision to do that, in those parts of the province where the French-speaking part of our population have that protection to have those services delivered in French now, that protection is guaranteed in law. It's not guaranteed by the Premier."

Mr Wildman: But that's the crux of it. It would have the force of law.

Mr Silipo: It would have the force of law. It's guaranteed in law. What the amendment is saying is, let's continue that same protection in law — not in a memorandum of understanding, not in an agreement that the Attorney General, in this case, and other ministers in terms of other services would sign with their respective municipal counterparts. That may be very nice, but it does not address the fundamental question of why that protection is being watered down.

If it's not the intent of the government to water down that protection, or if these words aren't the exact words, that they would come up with — there's certainly been enough time to come up with wording that they would find acceptable to say, "Yes, we'll make sure." It's only one more clause in the bill. We've seen much longer bills than this one. One more clause isn't going to weigh it down, yet it would be a very significant clause. It would be a clause that would reassure the francophone community out there that this government is not playing around with their basic rights. Right now, I say to the government members, they are fearful of what you are doing and they justifiably are fearful of what you are doing, not only because of the impact that this has in terms of their rights in the courts of this province but because of the precedent that this also sets for other services.

Friday, we had this incredible revelation — we discussed it a bit today during question period — of what this famous zero sum gain or this wash that the Premier and other ministers had continued to talk about in terms of the download and the transfer of responsibilities back and forth, how that would all come out. All of a sudden, on Friday, when the Minister of Finance released these figures, we saw that in fact it was far from being an even trade. Municipality after municipality is going to have to deal with cuts that they have to make if they're going to keep the zero sum gain that the minister talks about.

That just goes to show that municipalities are going to be under incredible pressure in the months and years to come as a result of the actions of the Mike Harris government. They're going to be under incredible pressure to be able to maintain the same level of services that they have now and not raise property taxes, which none of them want to do.

When you add to that the pressure that would be on municipal councils to have to in the mix of things also deal with the issue of how they provide services to the francophone communities, I think it's an impossible position to put municipalities in and it is an irresponsible action on

the part of this government to even raise that as a possibility.

If it's not the intention of the government to in any way water down the basic protections that exist, then this amendment — or, as I say, if this wording isn't quite there, if they want to suggest some other wording, then that's fine, but the basic issue is, a right exists now in law. If any service that's now delivered at the provincial level is transferred down to the municipal level, that same basic right should continue to be protected in law, not in a memorandum of understanding, that can only be changed by the Parliament of Ontario.

Even with our diminished rights in this place, at least there's more protection in this House than there is in the hands of the Attorney General or any other minister in the Mike Harris government.

The First Deputy Chair: The chair recognizes the minister from Carleton.

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): Mr Chair, I move that the committee rise and report progress and beg leave to sit again.

The First Deputy Chair: Shall the motion carry? All those in favour say "aye." All those opposed say "nay." In my opinion, the ayes have it. The motion is carried.

I do now leave the chair as the committee rises and the House resumes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): The committee of the whole House begs to report progress and asks leave to sit again. Shall the report be received and adopted? All those in favour say "aye." All those opposed say "nay." In my opinion, the ayes have it. It is agreed, it's carried.

Hon Mr Sterling: Mr Speaker, I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? All those in favour, say "aye." All those opposed, say "nay." In my opinion, the ayes have it. It is carried.

This House stands adjourned until 1:30 o'clock tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 2049.

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No. 262A

N° 262A

ISSN 1180-2987

Legislative Assembly of Ontario

First Session, 36th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Première session, 36^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Tuesday 16 December 1997

Mardi 16 décembre 1997

Speaker
Honourable Chris Stockwell

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Président
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 16 December 1997

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 16 décembre 1997

*The House met at 1333.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Alex Cullen (Ottawa West): Last Friday, when this Legislature was not sitting, the Minister of Finance announced the fifth edition of his provincial downloading numbers. For Ottawa-Carleton's 11 municipalities and regional government, it means \$229 million in additional costs with a funding shortfall of some \$43 million according to the minister's own figures. Clearly, for the taxpayers of Ottawa-Carleton, this is nowhere near revenue neutral. However, what adds insult to injury is the total absence of any transitional funding for Ottawa-Carleton.

The minister's downloading announcement included \$1.3 billion in transitional funding for Ontario municipalities, including the \$570-million community reinvestment fund, the \$77-million special circumstances fund, the \$75-million special transition assistance fund, the \$50-million municipal restructuring fund and the \$573-million municipal capital and operating restructuring fund. But none for Ottawa-Carleton.

I'm joined by my colleagues Richard Patten, MPP Ottawa Centre; Bernard Grandmaître, MPP Ottawa East; the honourable Dalton McGuinty, Leader of the Opposition and MPP Ottawa South; and Gilles Morin, MPP Carleton East, in saying that it is totally unfair that Ottawa-Carleton, with over 8% of Ontario's population, receives absolutely none of the \$1.3 billion in transitional funding to help ease the cost of downloading.

Quite frankly, we are being shafted. We call on the Harris government to honour its promise of revenue neutrality and provide taxpayers in Ottawa-Carleton with their fair share of the \$1.3 billion in transitional funding.

HOME CARE

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): This government is engaged in a cruel attack on seniors across Niagara region. The community care access centre in Niagara reports that it has had to drastically cut its provision of home care services because this government simply refuses to fund the increased demand for home care in Niagara, which has one of the most aging populations in all of Ontario; indeed, in all of Canada.

This isn't just about percentages. Let me tell you what it means in real terms to real people: our parents and our grandparents. Gertrude F., a resident of St Catharines, is 80 years old. She has suffered multiple strokes, she's barely ambulatory and definitely housebound. Prior to this government's attack on seniors, she received a modest six hours of home care a week. That home care meant cleaning her room, changing her bedding and bathing her. That home care has now been reduced to one hour a week: an 80-year-old woman, suffering from the affliction caused by those strokes and old age, receiving but one speedy sponge bath a week, and risking not even having her bedding changed on a weekly basis. I tell you, that's nothing for this government to be proud of.

In its passion to provide a tax break for the wealthiest of Ontario, it is attacking seniors in St Catharines, Welland, Thorold, across Niagara region. I tell you, the people of this province had better make a decision: Is it Mike Harris or is it our parents' and grandparents' welfare?

CRAAYTECH PAINTED PLASTICS

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): I am pleased to inform all members of this House about another positive business expansion in my riding. Craaytech Painted Plastics of Peterborough, a maker of custom mouldings and specialists in the area of painting plastics, recently announced their operation would be moving to a new location in the city, a location which is three times the size of its current plant.

Craaytech president Mr Paul Peterson indicated that an increase in the company's business machine and hardware production fields warranted the move.

Craaytech is yet another example of a good Ontario company reaping the rewards of an improved and vibrant economy, so much that this new expansion has led to 10 new workers being hired, bringing the total workforce to 45.

In September we heard from Ontario's finance minister that consumer confidence in the province has increased for the sixth straight quarter. Customers and a great many companies in this province are experiencing positive economic growth, and Craaytech Painted Plastics is no exception.

Please join me in congratulating president Paul Peterson and all of the workers at Craaytech for their hard work in making this company's expansion a great success story.

TÉLÉCOMMUNICATIONS DANS LE SECTEUR RURAL

RURAL TELECOMMUNICATIONS

M. Jean-Marc Lalonde (Prescott et Russell) : La semaine dernière j'ai fait parvenir une lettre au ministre du Développement économique, du Commerce et du Tourisme afin d'inscrire Prescott et Russell au sein d'une initiative de partenariat Accès aux télécommunications.

Je veux apporter à l'attention de la Chambre le fait que certaines communautés de Prescott et Russell, comme les régions de Hawkesbury et Embrun, ont parmi les pires services de téléphone de la province. Les fournisseurs de l'Internet reçoivent plusieurs plaintes, les utilisateurs de l'Internet sont frustrés et les gens d'affaires ratent des opportunités à cause des équipements démodés.

Bell Canada a fait des améliorations et a promis de poursuivre la mise à jour de son équipement. Cependant je crois que, avec ce programme d'accès aux télécommunications, il serait possible de faire progresser ce dossier plus rapidement.

The minister says that the information highway is transforming the ways in which Ontarians live and work. I have read about the project put forward in Lanark county and I want the rural communities of Prescott and Russell to get the same kind of help from the TAP initiative. I want to see all communities in my riding take full advantage of what the information highway has to offer. As I wrote in my letter, this is a project that needs to go ahead as soon as possible and therefore requires the minister's quick intervention, considering the rapid evolution of the information highway.

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CHARITABLE GAMING

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): Yesterday representatives of the Ontario Coalition Against Gambling Expansion were here at Queen's Park. They were visiting with MPPs, talking to them about their concerns, from the local community perspective, about the expansion of gambling in the province.

Also yesterday in the House, questions were again put to the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations. I have to tell you, as someone who has been raising this issue on behalf of the constituents of the Beaches, one of the communities that has been designated by the provincial government to have a charitable casino foisted on us, I was very disturbed by the answer the minister gave. He said, if I can paraphrase him: "Why would we listen to those referendums that were held in the communities? They were municipal referendums. They were municipal plebiscites. Surely we should be dealing with the municipalities."

When this government chose the 30-some-odd sites across the province that they were going to force charitable casinos on, they didn't consult with the municipalities, they didn't consult with the residents. They did a

marketing study and determined that that's where the money was.

I have to say that these casinos are very different than the commercial casinos, where you draw in tourism dollars. These casinos by their very design, if you read the consultant's report, are to be built to take money out of local economies. That's local businesses, local communities, local families that will suffer.

This government should begin to listen. If you believe in referendums, listen to the results, listen to the people. Put a moratorium on progressing with these charitable casinos.

HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Bruce Smith (Middlesex): This government has repeatedly stated its commitment to improving the province's health care system by eliminating administrative waste and duplication and enhancing patient care services. We've always been receptive to innovative community-based ideas and how this process should be undertaken and accomplished.

It gives me great pleasure to share with the members of this House the details regarding the exercise completed by Strathroy Middlesex General Hospital in terms of restructuring its facilities.

In 1995, the third floor of the hospital became vacant following restructuring. The board felt that an alternative use for the facilities could be found. The Ministry of Health approved the board's plan to convert the floor into office space for community agencies involved in health and social services as well as physicians' offices.

As of February 1, 1998, the entire third floor of the Strathroy Middlesex General Hospital will be occupied by a satellite office of the children's aid society, a satellite office of the community care access centre of London-Middlesex, Family Service London in Middlesex County, Madame Vanier Children's Services, SMGH Speech-Language Pathology and a variety of doctors' and surgeons' offices.

Strathroy Middlesex General Hospital, as a result of its restructuring, developed and implemented its own solution without additional cost to the taxpayer.

This is a success story for the individuals who spearheaded this exercise, and as MPP for Middlesex, I extend my sincere congratulations to them on their achievement.

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex South): To the minister responsible for seniors: Thousands of couples over the age of 65 are involuntarily separated because their spouse resides in a nursing home. In most cases, the spouse living in the nursing home has his or her income pay the care facility and they are eligible for the \$2 user fee for prescription drugs. This often leaves the spouse remaining at home with an income below the \$16,000 base and results in these seniors having to pay the \$100 deductible user fee and the higher \$6.11 user fee.

These seniors live at home alone and are involuntarily separated from their spouse by circumstance. As a result, they no longer have the same income as when their spouse was living with them. However, they're being charged a significantly higher drug dispensing fee than their spouse who is living in a care facility. We've been advised by the Ontario drug benefit plan that only legal separation or divorce is recognized for each to be considered on their own.

Minister, I call on you to take action and correct this inequity. In the situation I've described, the federal government considers the couple separated. Couples who are involuntarily separated not only lose the companionship of their spouse but also lose the economic benefit of cohabitation. This places a hardship on that segment of the population. I urge you to do the compassionate and correct thing and recognize involuntary separation, the same as legal separation or divorce.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr Floyd Laughren (Nickel Belt): This statement is directed towards the Minister of Labour. Hans Brasch, a retired miner from Inco, has written a fascinating book called *A Miner's Chronicle: Inco Ltd and the Unions 1944-1997*.

This book clearly describes the constant danger in which the miners worked. Mr Brasch has documented the deaths of 674 workers since the turn of the century in the mines around Sudbury. One of those workers was a 13-year-old boy who worked at Inco's predecessor company. In those days there were no age limits and few safety rules. Industrial accidents were commonplace and relief for miners' families rarely occurred.

In the early 1940s workers fought to organize and bring unions into the mines. Mr Brasch makes clear how important the unions were in improving workplace health and safety. Federal and provincial governments slowly realized they had a serious responsibility to regulate industry and to ensure employees were not abused and could work safely.

The NDP government continued to improve working conditions by passing Bill 40, which was among the most progressive labour legislation in Canada.

What a change from this government. They repealed our progressive legislation and brought in Bill 7, the most worthless piece of legislation I have ever seen.

I want to personally thank Hans Brasch for this important piece of work.

GIBRALTAR SPRINGS

Mr Bill Murdoch (Grey-Owen Sound): It is with great pleasure that I stand today to share a good-news story about a business on the brink of expansion in my riding.

First, I'd like to tell all the members in here that in the back room in the lobby there is water for them right here from a company in my riding and there's free water for

everybody in the back rooms if you'd like to get some. They're bottles of Gibraltar Springs natural spring water for each member straight from the top of Blue Mountain and captured by Gibraltar Springs in the bottles being placed before you, but they're in the back room right now.

Gibraltar Springs, in the heart of Grey county, has been in production and sales of this natural resource for three years and public demand is on the rise. To meet this demand the company is investing \$1.2 million in state-of-the-art equipment, constructing a new 12,000-square-foot expansion and trying to hire additional employees. As Gibraltar Springs draws its labour locally and purchases many supplies and services in Grey county area, the spinoff from its continued growth is good news for the community and in turn good news for the province.

Gibraltar Springs water contains less salt than any other bottled spring water. It is ozonated, bottled and sealed at the source and boasts a shelf life of two years. One sip and you'll know why the US export market for this product is booming. Even the Americans want to taste the good life in Grey county. My congratulations and best wishes to the staff and management of Gibraltar Springs for continued success in the future.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Member for Ottawa-Rideau.

Mr Garry J. Guzzo (Ottawa-Rideau): It's the first time you've spoken to me in a low voice for a while. That's why I was taken aback. I apologize, sir.

The Speaker: You have to read the report. I don't want to hear about the voices in your head. Go ahead.

Mr Guzzo: I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on finance and economic affairs and move its adoption.

Clerk at the Table (Mr Todd Decker): Your committee begs to report the following bill without amendment:

Bill 164, An Act to implement job creation measures and other measures contained in the 1997 Budget and to make other amendments to statutes administered by the Ministry of Finance or relating to taxation matters.

The Speaker: Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? No?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. I declare the motion carried.

Pursuant to the order of the House dated December 15, 1997, the bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AMENDMENT ACT, 1997

LOI DE 1997 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA PROTECTION DE L'ENVIRONNEMENT

Mr Carroll moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 177, An Act to amend the Environmental Protection Act / Projet de loi 177, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la protection de l'environnement.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr Jack Carroll (Chatham-Kent): This bill is designed to amend the Environmental Protection Act to require that all gasoline used in Ontario for motor vehicles has a 6% minimum content of ethanol, an environmentally friendly, clean-burning and renewable alternative to fossil fuel. Ethanol-blended fuels mean a cleaner environment, less dependence on crude oil, an expanded market and economic opportunities for rural Ontario.

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ORAL QUESTIONS

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Premier. Premier, I want to ask you a question on behalf of the people of Toronto. Quite simply, it's this: What have you got against Toronto? This week, you delivered the latest body blow. Despite your solemn promise to the contrary, the people of Toronto are now going to be hit over the head with a \$164-million property tax hike. This morning the mayor was here, and he told us this translates into an average \$200 property tax hike. It turns out that Toronto's share of the total provincial download is 33%. The important thing here is to compare that with the fact that only 22% of the population lives in the city of Toronto. Quite simply, Premier, I have to ask you, what have you got against the people of Toronto?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I think all Torontonians and all Ontarians and certainly all members of the Legislature would know that I've moved my family to Toronto. We go to public schools here in Toronto. We are enjoying what I think is the greatest city in the world very much. I might add that's not to take anything away from the great city of North Bay, Ontario, where I also have a residence.

I want to say very directly to the leader of the Liberal Party that Toronto has never seen such low tax increases in such booming times, with such job creation, since we threw you guys out of office.

Mr McGuinty: The Premier lends great comfort to the people of Toronto. It's clear that he doesn't understand that if Ontario is going to do well, so must Toronto. Put another way, Ontario can't do well unless Toronto does well. This is a global economy, and Toronto now has to compete with major cities from across the planet, not only within our province. Right here in Toronto, we're continuing to lose jobs throughout your term of office to the surrounding areas. A major factor in locating a business, as the Premier well knows, is the taxes. Quite simply, why are you causing taxes to increase in Toronto? Once again, what have you got against the people of Toronto?

Hon Mr Harris: I think you will realize that we do not believe any action we've taken would cause an increase in the taxes in Toronto. The only tax increases I have seen over the first two years of our office, and I stand to be corrected, I believe have come from spiralling education tax increases. As you know, we've stopped that from ever happening, not only in Toronto but all across the province over the next few years.

When I think back to the Liberal times, the massive property tax increases, the offloading, the commercial concentration tax, taxation and spending that cut the heart out of Toronto, and here we are, putting the heart back into Toronto; we're putting jobs back into Toronto; we're putting growth back into Toronto; we're putting hope and opportunity back into Toronto. The future has never been brighter since back in 1985, when we had the unfortunate electoral event of seeing the Liberals elected to destroy not only Ontario but particularly the city of Toronto.

Mr McGuinty: It's perfectly clear that the Premier simply does not understand the impact of his policies on the people of Toronto. First of all, he forced the megacity on them against their will. That represents a huge challenge in terms of preserving services and the quality of life. Now you're hitting them over the head with a \$164-million property tax hike. This leaves the municipal representatives only two choices, and you should understand this: Either they hike property taxes and scare even more jobs away or they cut services and reduce the quality of life enjoyed by the people here and cut the heart out of the city of Toronto. That's the net result of your policies. Once again, what have you got against the people of Toronto?

Hon Mr Harris: Actually there is a third alternative, and that is called doing more for less; that is called facilitating doing more for less. We had six mayors, five of whom are on the new council that will come in in January. One is mayor. Four others signed the document delivered to me that said: "We can find \$240 million in savings. We can deliver all the programs and we can find \$240 million in savings." We have allowed them to take a significant portion of those savings for tax cuts. We ask them to get down to the job of doing the work, as every other municipality is doing, as hospitals are doing, as school boards are doing, as this government has done in leading by example — and yes, we're asking them to find three cents of waste on the dollar, and we know they can do that.

STUDENT ASSISTANCE AND TUITION FEES

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition):

My second question is for the Premier as well. I want to ask you a question on behalf of Ontario students and their families. Their reality up until yesterday was that students were facing an average \$25,000 debt load when they finished college and university. You had increased their tuition fees by 30%, and they were facing unemployment — youth unemployment in the province was getting close to 20%; that's been on the rise steadily since you took office — so yesterday those families and those students held up their arms to you, and said, "Help us." You know what you said to them? "We're going to help you by allowing universities and colleges to raise tuition fees by another 20%." You told Ontario students and their families that you're going to be responsible for increasing tuition fees when all is factored in, and it's compounded by 60%. That's been your response to youth unemployment in Ontario.

My question is quite simply this: Why are you making it harder for Ontario's youth to pursue post-secondary studies when we all know that's what they're going to have to do in order to get a job?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): There are a few things I want to put on the table and the Minister of Education may have a few things he wishes to talk about as well.

We recognize that student debt is a problem. That's why it was one of the number one priorities of premiers and first ministers across the country, and a commitment by finance ministers, federally and provincially, and a commitment by premiers and the Prime Minister at our meetings last week in Ottawa, that we would deal, this budget year, with the problem of total student debt. In the meantime, we have added \$600 million to a bursary fund for low-income students. We have insisted that of all tuition fee increases, many of which are optional, 30% of those go to help low-income students. We are facilitating more students the opportunity to go to college and university, and we are holding universities and colleges accountable by saying they must find the wherewithal to fund each and every student in this province who meets the qualifications.

Mr McGuinty: I can understand why the Premier would be interested in disguising what happened yesterday. The fact of the matter is that he said tuition fees are going up another 20% in Ontario; it's as simple as that. Added to the 30% that he has already allowed for, that he has already implemented in Ontario, we're talking about a compounded increase of 60% at a time when youth unemployment in Ontario is 17%. At a time when Ontario families are asking themselves, "How can we afford to send the kids to school?" this Premier says, "I'm increasing tuition fees by 60%."

My question to the Premier is, how can he look those families and those students in the eye and say, "I'm going to help you by increasing tuition fees by 60%"?

Hon Mr Harris: I know the Minister of Education wants a chance to respond.

1400

Hon David Johnson (Minister of Education and Training): A couple of facts off the top: It's interesting that when the Liberals were in power they increased tuition fees by 35%, but I guess there's a different view of things in this day and age.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): I can't hear you.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon David Johnson: The Smith Advisory Panel on Future Directions for Postsecondary Education has focused on excellence and accessibility, which this government is doing through its actions: excellence in allowing universities some flexibility to deal with the situation but linking any increases with enriching classroom experience and enriching curriculum opportunities, and accessibility by requiring 30% of any tuition increases to go towards assistance to students who need it.

In fact some \$57 million has already been distributed since this government has been in power to students in need, through this 30% provision, and the opportunity fund which to date has some \$600 million will also be distributed to students in need and will improve accessibility in our post-secondary institutions.

Mr McGuinty: Let's understand the dynamic here that the Premier and the Minister of Education have put into play. First of all, they take \$400 million away from college and university funding. That's a 15% cut right across the board. Our colleges and universities are starved for revenues. We are now last-place funders in Canada. We fund our students on a per capita basis lower than any other province in the Dominion.

Last year 48 out of 50 American states increased funding to their publicly funded universities. They understand what the Premier should understand: If we are going to get ahead in a knowledge-based global economy, we've got to invest in our young people. It's as simple as that. Now what they've done is cash-starved our colleges and universities and what is effectively happening is our students are funding the tax cuts. That's exactly what's happening in Ontario today.

I am going to ask you a question again on behalf of Ontario families and students. How can you hit them over the head with a 60% tuition fee hike at a time when they're asking for your help?

Hon David Johnson: The Minister of Finance has indicated that the support for universities, colleges and students will rise some \$80 million over the next two years, from \$2.76 billion to \$2.84 billion. That extra support is going to our students across the province of Ontario. But in addition, there is the 30% increase, the 30% associated with any tuition increase, which will go to assist the students in need. Students who are able to afford a little more will pay a little more. Those students who are not able to afford the basic tuition will get more help than

they've ever had in the past, more help through the 30% portion of the tuition increase, more help through the student opportunity fund, some \$600 million.

There will be more help to students in need. There will be greater accessibility and the excellence will be assisted in our universities and colleges through the extra funds.

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): I have a question for the Premier. This morning the mayor of the new city of Toronto and several city councillors from the new city of Toronto came here to brief MPPs on the impact of your government's downloading on to the new city of Toronto.

What was truly insulting is that absolutely no one from your government, no one from your cabinet, none of your MPPs came to that meeting. You're downloading over \$164 million on to Toronto taxpayers and no one from your caucus or your government came to listen to them today. Premier, why did no one from your government come to the meeting? Don't you think that the new mayor of Toronto and the new councillors of Toronto have anything worth listening to?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): First New Democrats accused me of meeting too much with Mel Lastman; now you accuse me of not meeting enough with Mel Lastman. From 10 to 12 today was the scheduled time for our final caucus. I indicated that to Mr Lastman when he said he wanted to come at 11. I said, "If you want to come before or you want to come after, we can be available."

In fact, Mr Leach did meet with a number of officials before the 11 o'clock meeting. The Minister of Finance has offered to meet, officials are meeting and I stand ready to meet. But I did have a small commitment to 82 — 81, with the Speaker removed — of the most important people to the province of Ontario, and that is this caucus that has brought the marvellous change: the jobs, the hope, the opportunities, the prosperity and putting the heart back into the city of Toronto.

Mr Hampton: I always thought that the most important people were the people we represent. I'm sure the 2.3 million people who live in Toronto will really appreciate learning that they're not very important to you, that they're not important at all. But one of the questions that the new mayor of Toronto and the city councillors wanted to ask is this: They're being downloaded upon to the tune of \$163 million a year, yet they were totally shut out of your so-called community reinvestment fund and they were totally shut out of your so-called special adjustment fund; they haven't been able to find out what the criteria were for those funds, so they don't even know why they were shut out. Can you tell us what the criteria were for those two adjustment funds? Can you tell us why the 2.3 million people of Toronto were shut out from those adjustment funds?

Hon Mr Harris: I know that the Minister of Finance can.

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): The criteria for the community reinvestment fund were basically that some municipalities in this province — and he should know better than anybody else, coming from the area of the province that he does — simply do not have the tax base and the financial resources at their disposal to deal with some of the costs they are going to have to assume. Larger municipalities are more able to find cost efficiencies because of (a) the size of their operation and (b) the tax base, especially the commercial and industrial tax base, that they have at their disposal. Coming from the Fort Frances, Rainy River area of the province I would assume that you know that better than anybody else.

Mr Hampton: I was asking for the criteria by which Toronto was shut out. What I gather from the minister's answer is that 22% of the people are going to carry 33% of the downloading effort.

There's something else you talked about yesterday. You announced that you've got a \$786-million restructuring fund, as you call it. I suspect it's a slush fund, a slush fund that you intend to throw around in the next year to buy yourself out of political trouble. But besides that \$786-million slush fund, you're taking over \$600 million from municipalities.

Minister, can you explain this: Why not take your slush fund and apportion that to municipalities so that they are dealt with fairly? Why do you download over \$600 million on to municipalities at the same time as you've got a \$780-million-and-some slush fund?

Hon Mr Eves: First of all, it is not a slush fund; it is a sum set aside for restructuring costs, the same as we did last year. It's \$900 million. I would say to the leader of the third party as I said to the media yesterday, with the pressures we have in the health care system particularly, the restructuring costs and capital costs identified by Dr Sinclair's commission, and with respect to education in Ontario, there are plenty of significant restructuring cost pressures that I'm sure will easily be able to find places in areas of priority to Ontarians to spend that \$900 million in restructuring costs that, in the long run, will benefit all people in the province.

1410

HOSPITAL FINANCING

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): Back to the Minister of Finance. It's intriguing to learn that you're going to take \$600 million from municipalities, yet you've got this fund sitting over there with \$800 million in it that you're simply going to allocate as you see fit. I don't see the justice or the fairness in any of this, and I don't think any other people see it either.

You also announced yesterday that you're going to set up a two-year funding scenario for schools, hospitals and your other transfer partners. Then we looked through this blue book and we couldn't find the number anywhere for hospitals. Hospitals have no idea how much money they're going to have to operate on next year. Can you tell us,

Minister, how much money hospitals will have to provide health care next year?

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): I can tell you that we have increased the amount of operational funding in health care from just under \$18 billion this year to \$18.2 billion the year after and \$18.3 billion the year after that. Those are operational funds. Obviously, the exact amounts for individual hospitals in the province will be dealt with by the Minister of Health in due course.

Mr Hampton: This gets to the heart of the problem. We know this government signed a deal with doctors and we know that deal with doctors is going to cost the province about \$250 million a year, about what you've put into the health care budget. So don't try to play the \$250 million four ways. That's going in to pay for the higher fee adjustment for doctors. If you take that out, the health care funding doesn't cover inflation, doesn't cover a growing population and doesn't cover an aging population.

Since that kind of shortfall is developing and you said in your document yesterday that you were going to give hospitals a two-year funding envelope, and since there's no new money, they want to know how much money they are going to have to work with this year to provide the health care services that people need. It's nowhere in the blue book you released yesterday. How much is it?

Hon Mr Eves: The announcement yesterday was not intended as a specific announcement for every single hospital in the province. Surely the member must understand that. We inherited a health care system where the operational funding was in the neighbourhood of \$17.5 billion a year. We've increased that to date to about \$18 billion a year. We have committed that it will be no less than \$18.2 billion the year after and \$18.3 billion the year after that.

I think his very question, though, identifies some of the pressures on the health care system we have in Ontario, exactly why in his previous question we talked about \$900 million being set aside for restructuring and capital costs that will have to be directed, in my opinion, in the priority areas of health care and education in the province.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Answer, please.

Hon Mr Eves: I think we have increased health care funding significantly in the province. We understand it is a priority for Ontarians and we will continue to develop —

The Speaker: Final supplementary.

Mr Hampton: Here is the scenario that the Minister of Health is setting up. This government announced in 1995 that they were cutting \$1.3 billion from hospitals. So far they've cut almost \$800 million from hospitals. They announced this summer that they weren't going to take the further \$500 million this year but they refused to come clean with hospitals across the province as to exactly what funding they will have for this next year.

The minister comes in here yesterday and brags that he's going to increase health funding, yet when you look at the numbers, there is in fact going to be a cut. The doctors have already spoken for the little bit of new money that's coming in. Your health budget doesn't keep pace

with inflation, it doesn't keep pace with the growing population and it doesn't keep pace with an aging population. That means the home care operators, the community care operators, the long-term-care operators and the hospitals are all going to have to compete for less money.

Hospitals want to know how much you are going to cut them by. They can tell there is no new money here. How much are you going to cut the hospitals by? Tell them, so they have some idea how they are going to manage this in the new year.

Hon Mr Eves: To the leader of the third party very directly, hospitals will not be cut next year.

HOME CARE

Mr Gerard Kennedy (York South): I have a question for the Minister of Health, who hopefully can answer more directly, about the circumstances that affect the health system. We have in Ontario a Mike Harris health care system that is cutting care away from individuals, individuals like Kim Taylor, who is a young mother with epilepsy in Ottawa, and you're going to take away two days worth of home care from her. You're going to take that away to save money.

You're also going to take away care from an 88-year-old who had a stroke, whose daughter writes to you that the reason for the cuts to home care, according to your staff, is to stay within budget. Patient needs and family support needs do not appear to be part of the equation. Government cuts to home care and health care are seriously affecting the lives of her father, herself and her family.

Minister, will you stand in your place today and give a guarantee that this man, Mr Jesus Leon, and Kim Taylor will receive continued home care?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health): To the member opposite, my assistant deputy minister met last evening with the executive director of the Ottawa CCAC and we have indicated to them that there is to be no reduction in services. They have been advised and they will be notifying their clients accordingly. We're also going to be working with the CCAC to ensure that they do use best practices because, as you well know, they do get an adequate share of money. If we take a look at other jurisdictions, they are doing very, very well per capita.

Mr Kennedy: The minister has told us that at the eleventh hour she's going to give funding back to some of the families. I want to get the same assurance today for people in Niagara region; for an elderly couple, Michael and Mildred, 84 years old, who are undergoing surgery and are being told they are going to lose their care. They are going to have to depend on themselves or be left alone.

Minister, there is no magnanimity on your part. There is \$75 million you've taken out of Ottawa. There is \$30 million you've taken away from the health care system in Niagara. You've created these needs and now you're cutting back and trying to compare it to somewhere else. These are real people, Minister.

How are we to believe what you're going to do, Minister, when last year you promised all kinds of money? Your ministry said they would give more money for home care. Instead, to these people, to Michael and Mildred, they need to know you cut \$4 million last year out of home care. You didn't increase it, so why should we believe you now? Will you guarantee today that Michael and Mildred will get continued home care and you won't take it away from them?

Hon Mrs Witmer: If you take a look at the situation, we actually have committed to invest an additional \$170 million into home care. We have put \$5 million —

Interjections.

Hon Mrs Witmer: As I've just indicated, we have and we are reinvesting \$170 million into community care. These are additional dollars.

I want you to also know that as far as demand for service is concerned, obviously it continues to increase. In fact, we have actually increased spending on home care in this province by 55% over the last five years and we're going to continue to work with the CCACs throughout this province. We are endeavouring to make sure that each community has equal funding. I guess I would ask you, do you want me to remove —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): New question, third party.

1420

NORTHERN HEALTH SERVICES

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): My question is also for the Minister of Health. Minister, your admission that the government has no vision for health care is quite astonishing when we look at the changes you've already made in the health care system.

Today I want to ask you about your plans for health care delivery in the north. Health officials in the north are very clear that the benchmarks laid out in the northern and rural health care framework are not appropriate in the vast regions of the north, where a 40-kilometre trip between hospitals is rare. They speculate that using the definition in the framework, the north would have only two class C hospitals rather than the six or seven which operate now. Moreover, you say you will let the district health councils do the planning but you've thrown them into disarray by restructuring them at the same time. Then there's the wild card of the health care restructuring commission, which apparently overrides all other decision-making when it comes to its directions on restructuring and reinvestment.

Minister, tell us, does your vision of health care in the north bear any relation to reality at all and will you guarantee that the decisions on restructuring will meet the unique needs of northern communities?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health): Yes, I certainly can assure you that we're going to continue to work with all of those individuals in rural and northern communities to ensure that the needs of their populations are addressed. I also want to share with you the fact that the benchmarks are not yet final.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Supplementary.

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): Let me be a bit more specific and focused. I've been meeting with the health care coalition in Sault Ste Marie and just last week I visited the Elliot Lake hospital with Sister Sarah Quackenbush. They are concerned about their diminishing ability to deliver the health care that their citizens need. This very disturbing overlap of jurisdictions and lack of any clear direction and agreed-upon benchmarks has them even more concerned.

In Sault Ste Marie we've been restructuring for about six years now and some say that we've done too much. The hospitals have applied to your ministry for money announced in this year's budget by the finance minister to help in that. Will you at the very least agree today to make sure that money flows so that there's no more stress to the system of hospitals in Sault Ste Marie and area?

Hon Mrs Witmer: We certainly are aware of the fact that throughout the province there are hospitals that have very differing needs. We're quite prepared to meet with the individuals involved and certainly see if we can address some of the issues of concern to them.

LAND USE PLANNING

Mr Bill Murdoch (Grey-Owen Sound): My question is to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Grey county has reached the final stages for approval of its new official plan by the Minister of Municipal Affairs. Unfortunately, there is one obstacle standing in their way: the Minister of Agriculture. Your ministry has a province-wide policy stating that minimum acceptable farm size is 100 acres. According to Sharon Johnston, a ministry official, 50-acre rural lots can't be considered bona fide farms.

Minister, why are you turning your back on this government's commitment to allow municipalities flexibility to meet local circumstances, forcing Grey county to go to the OMB?

Hon Noble Villeneuve (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, minister responsible for francophone affairs): It's always a pleasure to hear from my colleague from Grey, who represents some of the best farms you'll find anywhere in Ontario.

As my colleague and as members of this Legislature know, the government has taken steps to allow municipalities to take more of the decisions that affect them and take them out of Queen's Park.

We repealed the previous government's land use planning policy and replaced it with a one-window approach to streamline the approvals and process planning decisions. Through this new one-window planning system, the role of the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs is to provide technical advice and comments to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing on planning matters.

I certainly will work with my colleague from Grey to make sure that we can meet some of the needs that are facing his farmers.

Mr Murdoch: According to the report of the Mike Harris Task Force on Rural Economic Development, any changes to provincial planning legislation must realize that rural Ontario is not a uniform region where municipalities have uniform priorities. Individual municipalities must not be limited in their options for determining appropriate growth and development strategy.

Bill 20 was implemented with the one-window approach to streamline the approvals process and give municipalities greater flexibility in their planning decisions.

Also worth noting is that the Grey County Federation of Agriculture actively participated throughout the entire official process and did not file objection based on lot size or any other issues.

Minister, I want you to tell us today that you will help Grey county in this problem so that they won't have to take their plan to the OMB. In the past, the government used to do that; now my municipality is going to have to do that, unless you can get control of Sharon Johnston.

Hon Mr Villeneuve: We appreciate that there has been a lot of discussion in Grey county. There's been a slight bit of disagreement from a number of municipal politicians and from the federation of agriculture, and that's very healthy. I think the discussion and some disagreement —

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): That's not even intelligent heckling.

Hon Mr Villeneuve: I had the opportunity of checking the statistics for 1996. They show that in Grey county there are 3,134 farms, and some 572, or 18%, have less than 70 acres, so that indeed does provide some startup real estate for those who want to become farmers.

Laughter.

Hon Mr Villeneuve: That's not a joke. That's very important, because if we don't have farmers start up, our city people will be a little short of food. I know you people really don't care about that, but OMAFRA is fully supportive of the one-window approach. I certainly fully intend to work with my colleague from Grey to try and solve the dilemma.

1430

PRINCIPALS AND VICE-PRINCIPALS

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William): My question is for the Minister of Education. Hundreds of thousands of teachers, parents and students have tried to tell you that your education Bill 160 is a bad bill. Now it seems even you are recognizing it's a bad bill. You're holding off making some parts of it law, at least until you're under a little less pressure.

Specifically, you're holding off on your decision to punish principals and vice-principals by stripping them of all their rights and their seniority as teachers if they choose to remain as principals and vice-principals and not return to the classroom. Obviously, you are afraid you're going to lose a court challenge on this and you're trying to

avoid the embarrassment of yet another loss. But you are still planning to force principals and vice-principals to make their choice on April 1. The only difference is that you're leaving them hanging until March 31, the day before they have to make their decision, before they know for sure whether you're going to go ahead with this. Why do you not just repeal this part of the bill and let principals and vice-principals continue as effective educational leaders?

Hon David Johnson (Minister of Education and Training): It's not unusual to proclaim different aspects of a bill on different dates, particularly for a bill of this size. For example, the class size restrictions and instructional time aspects will not come into effect until September 1 of next year.

In terms of the principals and vice-principals, we thought it prudent to go through a consulting process, as I think I've mentioned in this House a number of times, perhaps even in response to your very own questions. We will, through a work group, be consulting on employment conditions for principals and vice-principals over the next three months, and that aspect of the bill will be proclaimed on March 31. I think that's just prudent planning. We intend to proceed with the bill and the proclamation on that particular date because it avoids the conflict that principals and vice-principals find themselves in today.

Mrs McLeod: You passed a law and then you hold it over their heads dangling while you carry out something you want to call a consultation. Minister, you have created incredible confusion and enormous anger in the way you've dealt with principals and vice-principals. You were going to leave them alone until they dared to protest against your government's attacks on education, and then you changed your bill to punish them by stripping them of their rights as teachers and forcing them to decide on April 1 whether to return to the classroom.

Now you've thrown the whole situation into limbo. You could change your mind again before this bill becomes law, and, Minister, we hope you do change your mind. But on January 1 negotiations for new contracts begin. Again, that's part of your law. Principals and vice-principals will now be part of the bargaining unit for three months of those negotiations because they are still in the bargaining unit while this hangs over their heads. Will you honour any terms and conditions for principals and vice-principals that are negotiated with boards before March 31?

Hon David Johnson: In terms of the employment conditions for the principals and vice-principals, that is a matter that will be worked out. There is a work group that is in the process of being established. That group will be meeting with principals and vice-principals and their representatives from across the province. We want to ensure that principals and vice-principals are dealt with fairly, that their employment conditions are appropriate for their status, which is very important to this government.

In the first instance the principals and vice-principals were taken out of the union through the bill because of a

conflict situation they find themselves in. On the one hand, they're a member of the union; on the other hand, they have very direct responsibilities. But they're still key to our schools across Ontario, they still have a leadership role and we want to make sure that, through this discussion process, they're dealt with fairly.

HOME CARE

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): My question is to the Minister of Health. Your government's insistence upon a competitive marketplace delivery scheme for community-based home care services has caused enormous anxiety, especially among employees of the Red Cross and the seniors who depend on their services. Many workers have been told by the Red Cross that it could be forced to close down its home care services by the end of December.

As you know, my leader and I have been asking for months for the Minister of Health to meet with us on this issue. In October the Minister without Portfolio for seniors issues told this House that the jobs and pay of the workers would be protected. That was helpful, but workers and their clients are still worried.

Minister, we know this problem can be solved without destroying anybody's pay equity rights under the law if you'll just get off your competition and privatization bandwagon long enough to solve the problem. I'm calling upon you to guarantee today that there will be no interruption to the Red Cross home care services that people across this province depend upon.

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health): Mr Speaker, through you to the Minister of Labour.

Hon Jim Flaherty (Minister of Labour): I fully share the concern about the Red Cross situation and the homemaking. I am pleased that the Red Cross and the pay equity office, at our request, have been discussing the matter. There will not be a disruption of services. I am assured by the Red Cross that they will have their staff continuing to work. I am looking forward to the final advice concerning the outcome of the discussions between the Red Cross and the Pay Equity Commissioner.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Supplementary, member for Algoma.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): This is indeed a health care question. The health care of the many vulnerable frail elderly and disabled people in the province is threatened. Their ability to stay in their own homes is threatened because of the government's desire to privatize the services and to cut wages.

This is not really a pay equity issue. The Red Cross has been subject to pay equity for over 10 years now. It became a problem when this government changed the funding to a competitive model to be in line with your privatization approach.

The former Minister of Health wouldn't meet with us about this issue and now the crisis has landed in your lap. Time is running short. People in Sault Ste Marie and across Algoma district and the rest of the province want to

know these services will continue into the new year. Will you take the responsibility now and assure us not only that the services —

The Speaker: Thank you. Minister.

Hon Mr Flaherty: I am pleased to confirm that both the Red Cross and the pay equity office agree that a disruption of service will not occur and that they are committed to working towards a positive solution that ensures clients receive the quality care that is important in many communities in Ontario. If I may quote from the memo from the Red Cross to its staff:

"While there is much work to be done to finalize the details of a solution, we want to assure our staff and clients that daily operations will proceed as usual while that work is in process. We will provide homemaking services during this time, without disruption."

I might add, this is despite the fact that my predecessor in this ministry and I both wrote to the leaders of the opposition parties in October and November and asked for their cooperation in solving this important pay equity problem, and received none.

TELEMARKETING PRACTICES

Mr Ed Doyle (Wentworth East): My question is for the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations. Consumers and in particular the seniors of the province of Ontario are facing telephone scams from time to time in the province. Most recently we've seen a case where consumers receive mail indicating they've won a contest and are told that if they want to get their prize they should dial a 1-800 number. When they dial the number, they find it is transferred over to a 1-900 number and then they're being charged \$3 a minute without their knowledge. I wonder what your ministry is doing to prevent such scams so we can protect the people of Ontario.

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations): I thank the member for Wentworth East for the question. It's very timely, because as we head into the Christmas season, more of these types of scams start to appear — scratch-and-win cards that come.

This 1-900 scheme the member so appropriately describes: We have been in touch with the CRTC, and there are some safeguards in place for the consumer. If the consumers complain about this non-disclosure, the CRTC will contact the phone company and ask them to cease and desist, and if they fail to comply they will cut that off. The consumers can also, as I understand, contact their phone companies for a one-time waiving of charges with respect to this.

We believe the impact of telemarketing fraud in the province to be in the range of about \$20 million this year. We're involved with Phonebusters, an initiative we have done with the Solicitor General's office to combat this type of fraud. Very recently we launched a Seniors Busters to help seniors combat this, with a reverse boiler room. I was there with the minister responsible for seniors, Mr Jackson, and it is another initiative. Seniors

particularly should be on guard against this type of fraud that takes place during the holiday season.

1440

Mr Doyle: Minister, this is particularly good news for the elderly and the vulnerable. However, analysing the success of such programs is something we'd like to know about too. Can the minister assure the House that these types of initiatives are working? Are the consumers in this province learning how to avoid these telemarketing scams?

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: The member is quite correct that the way we need to combat this is through education. We expect to have a decrease of this type of crime in Ontario by about 41% this year.

I'd like to share a quick story here. I want to congratulate Fred Sampson, who is 73 years old. He is in Port Hope. He is a senior, obviously. He was contacted and told that he had won three of five different prizes: a cheque for \$2,500, a 20-inch satellite dish, a cheque for \$5,000, a \$3,000 government bond or a trip for two to Hawaii. They told him that what he had to do to get this was send a cheque for \$1,600 to them. This was his response: "I told them to deduct the \$1,600 from the first \$2,000 prize and send me the rest of the prizes I won," Mr Sampson said with a laugh."

There's a general rule here that if you don't enter a contest, you don't win a prize. I congratulate Mr Sampson for being aware and taking steps to make sure he wasn't sucked in, as many people are.

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs. Your so-called revenue-neutral exercise in dumping on municipalities equals a \$43-million shortfall for Hamilton-Wentworth and Halton. There are some great suggestions. Trevor Pettit, your member for Hamilton Mountain, suggested that we hike user fees for disabled, for kids, for seniors, to make up for the shortfall.

Once you remove the fixed costs, it would mean a cut of 35% in the budget of Hamilton-Wentworth to make up for the shafting you have given them. In Halton, in Burlington, they would have to shut down the whole recreation department. They can't get hold of Minister Cam Jackson, so they have asked me to ask a question.

They cannot do what you have asked them to do. Every pool, every arena, every rec centre in Burlington would have to be closed down to make up for your shortfall. You have screwed Hamilton-Wentworth and Halton out of \$43 million. I have an invoice for you of \$43 million you owe the people —

Interjections.

Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): To the member of the opposition party, let's look at what we're really asking the municipalities to do. We're asking the municipalities to find three cents out of every dollar of their expenditures. Cut that and they're absolutely even. That applies to Hamilton. That applies to

Halton. That applies to all the municipalities in Hamilton-Wentworth region.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Member for Hamilton East, you must allow the minister to respond to your question.

Interjection: We can't hear him.

The Speaker: You can't hear him? I've got a good idea.

Hon Mr Leach: Mr Speaker, that's a very good suggestion. They would learn a whole lot more by listening, and it would be a new experience for them as well.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Don't help me, Minister.

Hon Mr Leach: We're asking the municipalities to save three pennies on a dollar of expenditure. If they do that, there is absolutely no need for any tax increase in any municipality in the province of Ontario.

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich): This is to the same minister. We spoke with the city of London today. Like Moses coming down from the mountain, Mike Harris said to the city of London, "You need to cut \$14 million more or raise property taxes." The city of London has already lost \$40 million over the last two years out of a total \$300-some-million budget. This is a huge hit to the city. But the worst part is that they can't get any information from your ministry because you're not returning your phone calls.

In fact, most municipalities cannot get access to the information they need to finish this budget process. What the treasurer of the city of London said is: "We've got them on speed dial. They've got us on voice mail." When are they going to get accurate information from you?

Hon Mr Leach: As the honourable member knows, most of the information was sent out last week. If there is some difficulty in contacting the regional office, I will commit to look into that for the member.

London is another good example. London had a consultant's report this last year that showed how they could come up with millions of dollars worth of savings and avoid the need for any tax increase in the coming year. London is asked to save three cents on every dollar of expenditure. If there is a municipal councillor in London who doesn't think they can find three pennies on the dollar, they should go and look for another job.

LABOUR DISPUTE

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): I have a question for the Minister of Labour. On November 23, the strike at Goldcorp in northwestern Ontario became the longest strike in Canadian gold mining history, 18 months. The communities involved, Balmertown, Red Lake and Cochenour, are truly struggling. The workers are suffering, the families are suffering and small businesses are suffering. This is all happening because your government passed labour law changes that permit scabs. The work that's being done at this mine is being done by scabs, many of whom aren't even from the province. My ques-

tion to you is, will you come to Red Lake and Balmer-town? Will you meet with the workers? Will you meet with the communities? Will you see how much damage is being done in this community by your government's decision to allow scabs?

Hon Jim Flaherty (Minister of Labour): I share the member's concern about the significant economic impact this dispute is having on the local community. My ministry, the Ministry of Labour, has expended substantial effort to assist the parties in these negotiations. I understand that the strike commenced many months ago, in June 1996. The Ministry of Labour mediator has remained in touch with the parties but no talks have been held in some months. The ministry and its mediators remain available to help resolve the dispute.

Mr Hampton: You are the new Minister of Labour. You don't have to repeat the mistakes of your predecessor. We're talking here about 6,000 people who live in the area. We're talking about children who don't have enough money to buy new clothes for school. We're talking about families who are having trouble paying the heating bill. We're talking about a corporation, Goldcorp, that has basically said it doesn't care about this community, it doesn't care about these workers. It's going to bring in scabs from outside the province to do the work at this mine.

Minister, you've got an opportunity to correct the mistakes. I put it to you again: Will you truly be a new Minister of Labour for this government? Will you come to those communities and see how much damage is being done to families, to workers and to the community as a whole by your government's decision to allow scabs in the workplace?

Hon Mr Flaherty: This government continues to believe in and support the collective bargaining process. The best solutions, as the member opposite knows, are those reached by the parties through negotiations independently and in a self-reliant way. The ministry provides mediation services; the ministry mediator has been involved since last year in this matter.

As I indicated earlier, the ministry stands ready to continue to provide mediation services to help the parties reach the solution that only they can reach to make the workplace harmonious.

1450

PETITIONS

CERTIFIED GENERAL ACCOUNTANTS

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas it is in the best interests of the public to have open market competition among professional accountants; and

"Whereas, under the Public Accountancy Act, only chartered accountants have full access to public accounting licences in the province of Ontario; and

"Whereas the province of Ontario restricts certified general accountants more than all other provinces, with the exception of Prince Edward Island; and

"Whereas certified general accountants, whose training is identical to that of chartered accountants in the province of Ontario, have a statutory right to practise public accounting in the provinces of Alberta, British Columbia, New Brunswick and Newfoundland, are free to practise in the provinces of Saskatchewan and Manitoba, can be licensed to practise in Nova Scotia and have considerable public accountancy rights in the province of Quebec; and

"Whereas this has created a monopoly in the province of Ontario since 1962 that is not only unfair to the public but also results in additional expenses, particularly to small business owners; and

"Whereas the monopoly results in NAFTA inequalities for certified general accountants in the province of Ontario; and

"Whereas according full professional rights to certified general accountants would lower costs to business by creating competition in accounting and auditing services, which is consistent with the current government's initiative to introduce measures designed to reduce government interference in the private and business lives of Ontario residents;

"We, the undersigned residents of the province of Ontario, petition the Legislature to grant the Certified General Accountants Association of Ontario their request for overdue amendments to the Public Accountancy Act to allow certified general accountants full access to public practice licences and to eliminate the present monopoly."

I'm happy to sign my signature to this as well.

CHARITABLE GAMING

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): I have a petition to the Ontario Legislature.

"Whereas Mike Harris during the 1995 election promised voters he would not allow more casinos without holding a community referendum;

"Whereas Mike Harris's Conservative government of Ontario has designated the Beaches community as one of 36 new permanent charity casino sites without holding a referendum;

"Whereas Mike Harris says these permanent casinos are simply replacing roving charity casinos;

"Whereas roving charity casinos can only be set up for a maximum of three days, can't stay open all night, have no more than 30 tables and take a maximum bet of \$10. On the other hand, the new casinos are permanent, operate 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year, with 40 tables, 150 video slot machines, and maximum bets of \$100;

"Whereas Mike Harris dismisses concerns, saying the total number of gaming days in Toronto won't change;

"Whereas the nature of gambling will change dramatically with the introduction of the highly addictive video slot machines and much higher dollar volume operations, it being evident by the government's estimate that the new permanent casinos will see about \$1 billion a year wagered;

"Whereas Mike Harris says the new permanent casinos will be safer and more accountable;

"Whereas at the Windsor casino extra law enforcement resources were provided by the province and the Harris government has made no such commitment for the new casino in the Beaches;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to cease any bids for the Beaches casino site, to fully consult with the community and not to force a casino site on the community against its wishes."

I am in complete agreement and have affixed my signature.

PAY EQUITY

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Simcoe Centre): This is a petition about the Pay Equity Act and its effect on the Red Cross's homemaker service. There are 272 signatures on this petition, not all of which are from Simcoe Centre.

EDUCATION REFORM

Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming): "Whereas the government of Ontario has not listened to the public with respect to Bill 160; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario has chosen to overtly deceive the people of Ontario as to the true objectives of Bill 160; and

"Whereas we, the people, believe that no government has a mandate to act in isolation of the wishes of the electorate of this province and we have lost confidence in this government,

"We, the undersigned electors of Ontario, petition the Lieutenant Governor to dissolve the Legislature and call a general election forthwith."

I'll sign my name.

FIRE IN HAMILTON

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I have a petition from my community in Hamilton.

"Whereas a fire at a PVC plastic vinyl plant located in the middle of one of Hamilton's residential areas burned for three days; and

"Whereas the city of Hamilton declared a state of emergency and called for a limited voluntary evacuation of several blocks around the site; and

"Whereas the burning of PVC results in the formation and release of toxic substances such as dioxins, as well as large quantities of heavy metals and other dangerous chemicals;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to hold a full public inquiry into the Hamilton Plastimet fire."

I continue to support my constituents who call for this public inquiry.

ABORTION

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton North): I have a petition from roughly 200-and-some people from my riding.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas we, the undersigned, believe in the sanctity of life, from conception to natural death; and

"Whereas pregnancy is not an illness; and

"Whereas the freedom to speak against the abortion of innocent and silent human beings is being subverted by prosecuting conscientious objectors to abortion;

"Therefore, we petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to (1) stop the funding of abortion clinics; (2) stop funding doctors for performing abortions through provincial medicare schemes; (3) do not provide funding for the training of abortionists; and (4) stop the prosecution of conscientious abortion objectors before the courts."

I sign my signature to this.

EDUCATION REFORM

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur): I have a petition signed by hundreds of students at Hillcrest high school in my riding of Thunder Bay who held a funeral march to mourn the passage of Bill 160. They have sent me these and they read:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas sections of Bill 160 allow the government unprecedented centralized control over education in Ontario; and

"Whereas sections of Bill 160 remove our democratic rights as citizens to comment or respond to education reform; and

"Whereas sections of Bill 160 allow the government to make further massive cuts to education funding without public consultation or debate;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Amend those sections of Bill 160 listed above."

I concur with that and will sign my name.

AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): This is a petition signed by over 1,000 people who live in the area of Fort Frances who are vitally concerned about health care. The petition reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Fort Frances ambulance dispatch not be moved to Kenora."

As I indicated, there are about 1,000 signatures and I have affixed my signature as well.

EDUCATION FINANCING

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough North): I have a petition which reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas education is our future; and

"Whereas students and teachers will not allow their futures to be sacrificed for tax cuts; and

"Whereas students, parents and teachers will not allow the government to bankrupt Ontario's education system; and

"Whereas we cannot improve achievement by lowering standards; and

"Whereas students, parents, teachers want reinvestment in education rather than reduction in funding; and

"Whereas students, parents and teachers won't back down;

"Whereas Ontario Liberal leader Dalton McGuinty has pledged to repeal Bill 160;

"Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to withdraw Bill 160 immediately; and

"Further, be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario instruct the Minister of Education and Training to do his homework and to be a cooperative learner rather than imposing his solution which won't work for the students, parents and teachers of Ontario."

I affix my signature to this petition.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I have petitions from members of the USWA, CAW, CUPE, UFCW, OPSEU and CEP from all across Ontario. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas approximately 300 workers are killed on the job each year and 400,000 suffer work-related injuries and illnesses; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario continues to allow a massive erosion of WCB prevention funding; and

"Whereas Ontario workers are fearful that the government of Ontario, through its recent initiatives, is threatening to dismantle workers' clinics and the Workers' Health and Safety Centre; and

"Whereas the workers' clinics and the Workers' Health and Safety Centre have consistently provided a meaningful role for labour within the health and safety prevention system; and

"Whereas the workers' clinics and the Workers' Health and Safety Centre have proven to be the most cost-effective prevention organizations funded by the WCB;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately cease the assault on the workers' clinics and on the Workers' Health and Safety Centre; and

"Further we, the undersigned, call upon the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to ensure that the workers' clinics and the Workers' Health and Safety Centre remain labour-driven organizations with full and equitable WCB funding and that the WCB provide adequate prevention funding to eliminate workplace illness and injury."

On behalf of my NDP caucus, I add my name to those of these petitioners.

1500

CHILD CARE

Mr Frank Klees (York-Mackenzie): This petition was delivered to my office by Ms Cheryl Stewart of Bolton. I present it now. It's to the Legislature of Ontario.

"We, the undersigned residents of Ontario, draw the attention of the Legislature of Ontario to the following:

"That managing the family home and caring for infants and preschool children is an honourable profession which has not been recognized for its value to our society, and deserves respect and support;

"That child care policies and funding should provide equity and fairness to all Ontario families;

"Therefore, your petitioners call upon the Legislature to (a) pursue policy and funding initiatives that will support a full range of child care choices such as extending the child care tax credit to all families, including those providing full-time parental care, and to (b) pursue discussions with the federal government to review the tax system to find ways to assist two-parent families where one parent chooses to remain at home."

I am pleased to affix my signature to this petition.

EDUCATION FINANCING

Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Prescott and Russell): I have a petition here signed by people from Smiths Falls and Nepean, the riding of Norm Sterling.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario government wants to take up to an additional \$1 billion out of the education system this year and every year; and

"Whereas the Ontario government would remove up to 10,000 teachers from classrooms across the province; and

"Whereas the Ontario government wishes to remove the right to negotiate student learning conditions; and

"Whereas the Ontario government proposes to undermine shared decision-making among students, parents, educators, trustees and taxpayers;

"We, the undersigned Ontario residents, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to withdraw Bill 160."

ABORTION

Mrs Helen Johns (Huron): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Ontario health system is overburdened and unnecessary spending must be cut; and

"Whereas pregnancy is not a disease, injury or illness and abortions are not therapeutic procedures; and

"Whereas the vast majority of abortions are done for reasons of convenience or finance; and

"Whereas the province of Ontario has exclusive authority to determine what services will be insured; and

"Whereas the Canada Health Act does not require funding for elective procedures; and

"Whereas there is mounting evidence that abortion is in fact hazardous to women's health; and

"Whereas Ontario taxpayers funded over 45,000 abortions in 1993 at an estimated cost of \$25 million;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to cease from providing any taxpayers' dollars for performing of abortions."

BEAR HUNTING

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex South): I have a petition from the Anderdon Malden Amherstburg Sportsmen's Association to the Parliament of Ontario.

"Whereas black bear populations in Ontario are healthy, with between 75,000 and 100,000 animals, and their numbers are stable or increasing in many areas of the province; and

"Whereas black bear hunting is enjoyed by over 20,000 hunters annually in Ontario and black bears are a well-managed renewable resource; and

"Whereas hunting regulations are based on sustained yield principles and all forms of hunting are needed to optimize the socioeconomic benefits associated with hunting; and

"Whereas the value of the spring bear hunt to tourist operators in northern Ontario is \$30 million annually, generating about 500 person-years of employment; and

"Whereas animal rights activists have launched a campaign of misinformation and emotional rhetoric to ban bear hunting and to end our hunting heritage in Ontario, ignoring the enormous impact this would have on the people of Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ontario government protect our hunting heritage and continue to support all current forms of black bear hunting."

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I have a petition forwarded to me by Wayne Samuelson, the new president of the Ontario Federation of Labour.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Minister of Labour has begun a process to fundamentally alter the Occupational Health and Safety Act and its regulations with the release of the discussion paper A Review of the Occupational Health and Safety Act; and

"Whereas these changes threaten to deregulate the health and safety protection for workers and reduce or

eliminate the rights of workers and joint health and safety committees; and

"Whereas the ministry intentionally organized meetings in a manner which allowed only marginal opportunity for workers to discuss with the ministry the issues raised in the discussion paper; and

"Whereas workers deserve a full opportunity to be heard regarding the proposals that threaten the legislated provisions that provide them with protection from workplace injury, illness and death;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to oppose the deregulation of workplace health and safety and any erosion of the protection provided workers under the Occupational Health and Safety Act; and

"Further, we, the undersigned, demand that province-wide public hearings be held once any amendments to the act are introduced."

I proudly add my name to those of these workers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TAX CREDITS TO CREATE JOBS ACT, 1997

LOI DE 1997 ACCORDANT DES CRÉDITS D'IMPÔT POUR CRÉER DES EMPLOIS

Mr Baird, on behalf of Mr Eves, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 164, An Act to implement job creation measures and other measures contained in the 1997 Budget and to make other amendments to statutes administered by the Ministry of Finance or relating to taxation matters / *Projet de loi 164, Loi visant à mettre en oeuvre des mesures de création d'emplois et d'autres mesures mentionnées dans le budget de 1997 et à apporter d'autres modifications à des lois dont l'application relève du ministère des Finances ou qui traitent de questions fiscales.*

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean): Mr Speaker, I would indicate at the outset of my remarks that I'll be sharing my time with the member for Durham East, the member for Scarborough Centre and the member for Muskoka-Georgian Bay. I will only be speaking for a very few brief minutes.

This bill arises out of the May 1997 budget and its central component is to help create jobs and encourage economic growth in the province of Ontario. Some suggest that at the provincial level you can't do much to help the Ontario economy, that you can't do much to create jobs. That's not something we on this side of the aisle believe. We believe the government must do everything it can to help create a climate for job creation.

This bill does a whole host of things, whether it's programs to help address youth unemployment, a concern to everyone in the province of Ontario; measures to assist

small business in their economic development, because we know on this side of the House that small business is where we find job creation in Ontario; and, in addition, measures to help research and development in our ever-important high-technology area. These areas are very key to job creation and economic growth in the province.

When you look at where we're going on job creation, it's quite substantial. We've seen more than 204,000 new private sector jobs created in the province just this year, in the first nine months. We're actually finding out a remarkable thing, that when you cut taxes you bring in more revenue. This year the government of Ontario, in cutting provincial income tax rates, will bring in more retail sales tax revenue, more corporation tax revenue, the big corporations paying more taxes under Mike Harris. Gasoline tax revenue is up, fuel tax revenue is up, land transfer tax revenue is up, mining profits tax revenues are up.

The one thing that is down is the Canada health and social transfer. Last year it was \$4.8 billion; this year it's going down to \$3.9 billion because the federal government is cutting health care, cutting hospitals. Jean Chrétien can't stop cutting health care, can't stop cutting hospitals. But there's no problem, because Mike Harris and Ernie Eves are finding more money for health care to replace the money that the federal Liberals have cut. That's very good news for the health care system in the province of Ontario.

In fact, not only have they replaced the money that the federal Liberal government of Jean Chrétien has cut for health care, they've actually found new money. Health care spending in Ontario in this fiscal year, in this budget, was increased by more than \$1 billion to what it was two years ago, and just yesterday the Minister of Finance, Ernie Eves, stood in this place and announced half a billion dollars of new money for health care, so more than replacing the federal cuts made by the federal Liberal government.

The economic update presented by the Minister of Finance, which relates directly to Bill 164 in the budget presented in May, is good news. We're seeing an incredible amount of job creation. In the second quarter of this year we saw economic growth in Ontario of 7.2%, an unparalleled success. Something is going on in Ontario that just isn't taking place in the rest of Canada. Something is going on in Ontario, economic growth, and it's in large measure because of the economic environment assisted by the policies of this provincial government.

1510

Some people have said, "Is it not the North American economy that's booming?" People have told my colleague the member for High Park-Swansea that. But it's funny: The American recovery started in 1992 and Ontario was left out. Ontario did not benefit from that economic revival in the United States and other parts of North America in 1992, 1993, 1994 and 1995. It only began to happen in the latter part of 1995. It began, we turned the corner in 1996, and now we're seeing solid job creation and economic growth in 1997.

We are concerned that there are a number of things we could do to help job creation. That's why we're instituting

in this bill an Ontario new technology tax incentive, an Ontario film and television tax credit, a graduate transitions tax credit and a cooperative education tax credit. There are a lot of students getting their first employment and some real job experience through co-op programs across the province, a lot of students getting that education at the University of Waterloo and coming to work at Northern Telecom in Nepean, creating jobs indeed. The film industry is a big employer here in greater Toronto: Ontario computer animation, with Sheridan College doing an excellent job; Algonquin College in Nepean doing an excellent job in that area —

Mr Derwyn Shea (High Park-Swansea): Humber College.

Mr Baird: Humber College in Toronto, the member for High Park-Swansea said. There's another story. He's always spreading the good news about Humber College.

We're seeing some solid economic growth and Bill 164 will help build on that economic growth. Bill 164 will help youth unemployment. It will help young people get that first job through a number of initiatives. It will help small business and in Ontario we know the importance small business plays. Most important, it'll help research and development in our high-technology industries.

Mr Speaker, I yield my time to my colleague the member for Durham East.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): I want to thank the member for Nepean for sharing his time with me. For those watching, Bill 164 is simply creating jobs and working with small business. It's our commitment to the people of Ontario: Bill 164, the Tax Credits to Create Jobs Act.

The bill will implement 1997 budget commitment investments, among other things, in research and development, new technology and youth employment. By responding to the ideas from Ontarians and people in my riding of Durham East, we've made initiatives and we've taken action.

Bill 164 will support creating more well-paid, leading-edge technology jobs for Ontario's youth. By enhancing the cooperative education tax credit, it's just one example of taking action to support youth employment, and there is the Ontario computer animation and special effects tax credit, working with the community college and the small business sector. It will also implement the Ontario business-research institute tax credit which will forge stronger links between the private sector and the Ontario post-secondary research institutions, and the Ontario new technology tax incentive, which will provide an incentive to acquire new technologies in Ontario.

Bill 164 enhances our commitment in our budget to give small business incentives to provide jobs and hope and opportunity for Ontario's young people. It will increase the tax credit rate for small business for both the graduate transitions tax credit and cooperative education tax credit. The member for Scarborough will outline that in his comments, I'm sure.

These tax credits will increase job opportunities for Ontario's youth by encouraging business to work more

and to take the experience and opportunities for students and institutions for a strong partnership in our future for our youth.

Our Minister of Finance, Mr Eves, in his economic outlook, the statement made yesterday, reviewed the outlook, the forecast. Look at the evidence: 204,000 new private sector jobs have been created in Ontario in the last nine months. Real economic growth is forecast at 4.4% in 1997. Indeed, confidence in Ontario's economy is stronger today because of our minister and our Premier and the leadership in this province. The initiatives in Bill 164 are part of our plan. With the advice of our constituents throughout Ontario, we're working to help young people.

What I'm really trying to share with those listening today, in the bill I'm going to focus more specifically on one section, section 43.6 of the act, which implements a budget commitment to refund graduate transition tax credits for qualified expenditures in employing under-employed Ontario post-secondary graduates. This is so important for the young people who have spent and committed their time and their personal desire in education and yet they have no job.

What does this provide, for both the graduate student who is unemployed and the employer? "A corporation that complies with the requirements of this section may deduct from its tax otherwise payable under this part of the taxation year, after making all the deductions" in other sections.... "The amount of a corporation's graduate tax credit for a taxation year is the sum of" the following.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): How come there's more people out of work? Could you explain that?

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Order, member for Kingston and the Islands.

Mr O'Toole: Going further, to subsection (4), "If the qualifying employment commenced after December 31, 1997 and the total of all salaries or wages paid by the corporation in the previous taxation year is greater than \$400,000, but less than \$600,000, the amount is the amount determined in accordance with the following formula...." Clearly from 15% to 20% tax credit, up to I believe a maximum of \$15,000, therefore working in partnership with small business to create jobs for university students who today don't have jobs.

There's one other section that may go unnoticed but it's a very important section. It's called schedule G, the Ontario Property Assessment Corporation Act. Schedule G goes on to outline that every municipality in Ontario is a member of the corporation first, and the statutory duties now performed by the assessment commission under the Assessment Act will be transferred to the corporation. The corporation will work with municipalities and indeed the province to administer the assessment system across Ontario.

We've listened. Clearly this is not a new idea. In fact the Liberal government produced this bill, Bill 156, An Act to establish the Property Assessment Corporation, back in 1990. Unfortunately, because they called a quick election, they didn't get time to carry it through. We're

delivering. We're prepared to listen to good ideas. The difference between us and the Liberals is we actually do something about it. This is exciting news.

We use as a constant guide this document here, this document that many Ontarians realized they'd never deliver on. But there were good ideas in here, fundamental ideas. What did they say? Introduce a balanced budget. I don't know how they were going to do it. They were going to have to reduce the same deficit as us. They wouldn't have done it. Clearly the evidence is they wouldn't have done it.

Tax and spend, that's their strategy. Scrap the 5% auto insurance premium. Abolish the annual corporation filing fee. Done. Reduce the corporate tax rate on small business. Done. This is what we're doing here. Introduce the Ontario operations job check. They wouldn't have done that. Clean up the Workers' Compensation Board by hiring a qualified CEO, also health and safety. Bill 99, we've already done it.

Going back, not to fault the previous government, the NDP government also brought in a document. Here is, "Property assessment to be paid for by municipalities." Clearly this is not new. If you look at our schedule G, you'll understand that we have taken the steps to introduce this new corporation to manage the whole issue of local assessment.

Thank you very much for allowing me to contribute to the discussion this afternoon. I'm looking forward to the comments made by the member from Scarborough. I'm sure he'll expand on a few of the comments that we've made this afternoon.

1520

Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Centre): It's my pleasure today to speak on third reading of Bill 164, the Tax Credits to Create Jobs Act, 1997. I think it's important that when we look at Bill 164, we look at everything else this government has done in terms of its budget process since taking office in June 1995, in fact being elected with a majority government by the people of Ontario.

When you look at Bill 164 and look at everything else we've done, the tax cuts, the cuts in government spending, we're doing everything we said we would do when we ran for office in 1995, in fact doing everything we said a year before the election when we released the Common Sense Revolution.

What does Ontario look like today with the effects of the Common Sense Revolution?

Mr Peter L. Preston (Brant-Haldimand): Prosperous.

Mr Newman: It's very prosperous, the member for Brant-Haldimand says, and he's absolutely correct, because real economic growth in this province was at 4.4% for 1997 so far. What has that brought about? Two hundred and four thousand net new private sector jobs in the last nine months alone.

When I look at the 1997 Economic Outlook and Fiscal Review and look at the numbers — I know the member for Durham-York cares very much about these numbers, and she pointed out to me today that when you look at Ontario

and the rest of the G-7 in terms of employment growth in 1996, Ontario was 1.5% and Canada was 1.3%, so we were ahead of the rest of Canada, but more important, we were ahead of the rest of the G-7. France had a zero per cent increase; Germany a net loss of minus 1.2%; Italy an increase of 0.5%; Japan a 0.4% increase; the United Kingdom a 1% increase; and the United States a 1.4% increase. Ontario was 1.5%, leading Canada and leading the G-7 in job growth.

Mr O'Toole: Clearly the plan's working.

Mr Newman: As the member for Durham East says, the plan is indeed working and many people have said that.

Mr O'Toole: Tax cuts create jobs.

Mr Newman: Tax cuts do indeed create jobs. We've seen a 27% increase in new housing starts in the province. We've seen higher consumer confidence and better business confidence numbers. In fact, at this time of the year when the shopping malls are probably at their busiest, why are they busy? Because more people are working today. There's a confidence that they're willing to spend dollars and to go shopping. One need only look at the traffic jams in the city every day, because there are more and more cars on the road, more people working, going to and from work.

What has this all done? It's all helped to reduce the deficit in this province from a projected level of \$6.6 billion for this year to \$5.6 billion. That's a deficit figure of \$1 billion less. That's almost cutting the deficit in half from when we took office from the NDP, when the deficit was almost \$11 billion in this province.

Our measures have had a great impact in this province, and we're seeing the positive results from it. They're not the tax-and-spend ways of the previous governments. The debt in this province doubled from 1990 to 1995 under the NDP and it actually tripled in the 10 years ending in 1995. What we've seen is that 65 tax hikes on the part of the other two parties did not bring about job creation in this province. In fact, if we look at the NDP and their 32 tax hikes, they actually reduced the number of people working in this province by 10,000 jobs.

I know many of my Liberal friends across the way talk about the number of people working or not working in this province. The fact of the matter is, there are more people working in this province today than ever before. The reason they're using some of the numbers they use is that more and more people are coming to Ontario today to work, because Ontario is indeed a province that is beginning to once again lead the economic engine for the rest of Canada.

I too like to look at the Liberal red book of 1995, as my friend for Durham East does. Let me read to you what the Liberal red book said on balancing the budget: "High deficits and a big public debt are job killers." I couldn't agree with them more. "Rising deficits mean that instead of having more money in their pockets, Ontarians are paying more interest on the debt." Right now, we're spending \$9 billion a year on interest alone in this province. That's absolutely out of control. "Business considers

a province that can't control its spending a poor place to invest." We're getting our financial house in order here, and that's bringing jobs to this province.

"Ontario has now had four deficits in a row of more than \$10 billion." The four deficits they would be talking about would be under the NDP government. "Ontario and Quebec are the only provinces in Canada that did not reduce their deficit in 1994-95. The total Ontario debt has more than doubled to a staggering \$90 billion."

This is the best part, and I know they are trying to be very serious about this, but it says, "A Liberal government will both preach financial restraint and practise it." I guess that's their attempt at humour. But what it says here is, "Through the Ontario Liberal balanced budget plan, we will balance the provincial budget within four years."

It goes on to say that government must not balance the budget by raising taxes. I absolutely agree. That's why we've had 30 tax cuts since we've taken office. We have had 30 tax cuts in this province.

A Liberal government will cut government spending. It says, "A Liberal government will cut government spending by more than \$4 billion while preserving health care and education." That sounds familiar.

Mr Marcel Beaubien (Lambton): What page is that on?

Mr Newman: That's on page 7.

"Our spending cuts and savings fall into five categories: program reductions, leaner government, public/private sector partnerships, job growth and welfare reform" — their plan of mandatory opportunity would have actually seen the welfare rates of some people in this province cut by 30% — "and cutting political spending." It goes on to say they would scrap the Interim Waste Authority; they would end the failed Jobs Ontario program.

This is one of my favourites: They would cut grants to big business by 60%. So they would still give grants to big business.

Mr Baird: Just not as much.

Mr Newman: Just not as much. They'd have 40%. What have we done? We have cut corporate welfare to nothing —

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order. The member for Scarborough Centre is the only one in here who is supposed to be talking. The rest of you, be like me and just listen, please.

Mr Gerretsen: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'm just wondering, and I'm sure that you can assist me on this because you have assisted me so often in the past, is it important that we tell the truth in this House? Is that important? Because I have severe reservations —

The Acting Speaker: Please take your seat. That is not a point of order. This is not question period.

The Chair recognizes the member for Scarborough Centre.

Mr Newman: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker, because it gave me more time during that break to find more interesting promises here in the Liberal red book.

They were going to scrap the Interim Waste Authority and the failed Jobs Ontario program; cut the grants to big business by 60%, as I mentioned — that is corporate welfare and we have ended that in this province; scrap the royal commission on the Workers' Compensation Board — done; scrap the Ontario Training and Adjustment Board bureaucracy. This is just unbelievable, but this is the red book that's saying it here.

It is important to know that all the things the Liberal Party said they would do is what we're doing. They continually vote against every single measure that we bring forward. Every measure to create jobs, to create prosperity, growth, hope and opportunity in this province, they vote against.

That's what Bill 164 is all about. It's about tax credits to create jobs. It's about the graduate transitions tax credit. It's about the cooperative education tax credit, the community small business investment funds program, the small business investment tax credit, the Ontario business-research institute tax credit for R and D, the Ontario new technology tax incentive, the Ontario computer animation special effects tax credit, the Ontario film and television tax credit, the Ontario book publishing tax credit, the child care tax credit, and the return of property assessment to municipalities.

1530

We can see that Bill 164 is all about creating jobs through tax credits and tax cuts. That would be 30 tax cuts on the part of this government since we took office in June 1995. We talked about income taxes being cut and returning that money to the pockets of Ontarians. I think everyone forgets that those hardworking Ontarians were the ones who earned that money in the first place. They ought to be keeping more of that money. We have seen, and the numbers have proved, that when you cut taxes you have more revenue, and not only do you have more revenue but you have more people working in this province.

In spite of everything we've done — I know and I'm confident, and I'm sure all members on this side of the House are, that we will indeed balance the budget — today we're still spending \$640,000 an hour more than we take in in revenue. Think of the interest we're paying in this province. We know individual families could not afford to do that, businesses could not afford to do it, and governments cannot afford to do it. All we're doing in government is trying to get our own financial house in order for the good of the province.

I think it was important yesterday to keep in mind what the finance minister said when he said that in health care alone we're spending about \$18 billion this year alone. We made a commitment in the Common Sense Revolution to have spending of at least \$17.4 billion. When you go through the red book, they promised \$17 billion.

Just before I close, I think it's important to note that health care funding for 1998-99 will be at least \$18.2 billion; in the year after, 1999-2000, it will be \$18.3 billion. None of this amount has to do with capital or restructuring costs.

In closing, I will be supporting Bill 164, as I have all of the other budgetary measures on the part of this government, because in the end what they do is create jobs for all people in Ontario.

Mr Bill Grimmer (Muskoka-Georgian Bay): I am pleased to have the opportunity to join the debate on third reading of Bill 164 and add my comments to those of my colleagues. In doing so, Mr Speaker, because I know you like us to abide by the rules, I'll try and stick to Bill 164, unlike some of my colleagues, but I know their enthusiasm for the red book has got the better of them.

I want to touch on a couple of things in Bill 164. I'm anxious to see how the Liberal Party will vote on third reading of Bill 164, because as we have seen, so many things in this bill address the issue of creating jobs and helping the economy, and so many things in this bill really carry out some of the promises that were contained in the red book.

I want first of all to mention that this bill is chock-full of measures that will help small business, chock-full of measures that will help the development of research and development in Ontario businesses, chock-full of measures to enhance the opportunities for businesses that are in the new technology field to employ more people. Also it's got many measures in it that will help the cultural industries that are such a big part of my riding of Muskoka-Georgian Bay. It is especially directed at providing jobs for young people. For those reasons I would think that the opposition would be quite anxious to support this bill.

One of the key measures in the bill is the enhancement of the Ontario film and television tax credit. This actually has a significant impact in my riding because in the last few years in Muskoka-Georgian Bay there's been quite a development of the film industry. You'll see it especially in the summer months, although last winter, as some people will recall, there was a very significant major film in Muskoka. Unfortunately there was also a major fire that occurred as a result of that film, but we're all happy to see that Windermere House has been rebuilt.

One of the reasons the film industry comes to Ontario has to do with the availability of young talent in the film and related industry in Ontario. One of the things this bill will do is enhance the opportunities for those very skilled people who work in the film industry and who the international film industry knows are located in and around the Toronto area.

As set out in the bill, there will be an increase to the tax credit rate, for those people who qualify under the Ontario film and television tax credit, to 20% from the 15% currently provided. It is estimated that will raise the annual tax credit limit for corporations from \$2 million to \$3 million. That should certainly create additional incentive for the film industry to invest in film productions in Ontario, and it should also provide additional jobs for those skilled people, most of whom would be in the young category and those are where we really have to focus our efforts.

I want to remind viewers that in the past six months 39,000 jobs have been created for youth in this province,

which accounts for over 90% of Canada's youth employment gains in recent months.

I also want to comment that one of the good reasons to support the bill is that the tax credits that will go to employers who reach out and employ young people who have graduate or post-graduate degrees have been enhanced from 10% of salaries, wages and benefits for those people hired to 15%. So it's a 50% increase in the benefit available to employers of post-secondary graduates, and that should enhance the opportunities for young people who are available to work in those industries. It should also help the leading-edge technology industries in general.

The research and development aspect in the bill is also something that's worthy of support. I'd certainly encourage all my colleagues to take a close look at that section of the bill because it's going to enhance the opportunities for companies to deduct from their income those eligible costs for businesses that are in the research and development field.

I'd like to point once again to the tax credit for the Ontario book publishing industry. This is something our government has a great interest in. We want to encourage the book publishing industry in Ontario and encourage the development of more domestic children's books, especially for those talented people, many of whom are young people, in the province of Ontario.

In conclusion, I would like to provide my own ringing endorsement of Bill 164, which I'm sure the opposition should pay close attention to because it has so many measures that will provide economic growth and jobs for the people of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Gerretsen: Let's first get it clearly on the record that all that the members have talked about are items contained in one of the seven schedules of this bill. They haven't talked about the other six schedules at all. We support those measures. We support those tax credits. It's the other sections of the bill we're concerned about.

Let's get a couple of other things quickly on the record. Number one, the number of people who are unemployed in this province are 3,000 more than when you took office, and it is contained right here in the Ministry of Finance statistics that your government is putting out. In June 1995 there were 499,000 people unemployed in this province, and in November of this year there were 502,000 people unemployed in this province. So yes, it may be better for some people, but for an awful lot of people things are actually a heck of a lot worse.

Finally, and I cannot sit down without saying this, how did this bill get here? We're implementing a budget that was introduced in May of this year. The government did not bring in its budget legislation until about two weeks ago. The bill was given second reading last week, at which time it was referred to the finance committee here at the Legislature. A time allocation motion was brought forward so that the finance and economic affairs committee could not even debate the bill. All they could do was vote on the different sections as contained in the bill.

This is a sheer mockery of the democratic system. They have brought in time allocation once again for I believe the 20th time on a major piece of legislation, and for the first time they have in effect said to a committee that even though the matter has been referred to the committee, they can't even debate it. Shame on you. You're undemocratic. All you are is just one big bully.

1540

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): There are two points to this bill in terms of what the government is doing. One point is the undemocratic process they're following as a government when it comes to how they run this House. The second issue is the incompetence of the government and the government House leader. I've been around this Legislature, as have other members, for a number of years now, and we all know that when it comes to budget bills and interim supply bills, which we're going to have to debate a little later, the government normally has at least enough common sense to organize its House calendar in such a way that members of the House are given the opportunity to debate those interim supply bills and budget bills in a timely fashion and to make sure they have them passed on time, which is very important.

When I look at the work of the government House leader under the Rae government, the House leader under the Liberal government and the House leaders under the Bill Davis government and other Conservative governments before that, at least they knew how to get it right. But these guys — I say that because that's mostly what they are, a bunch of Reformer-type guys — come to this House, think they're smarter than everybody else and, quite frankly, cannot figure out how to pass legislation through this House in a timely process.

It puts us in the undemocratic stage now that they have to come into this House with a whole bunch of time allocation motions to pass their bills. As if that's not bad enough, they had to come to this House in August this year to change the rules of the House because they didn't know how to operate within the context of a democracy. Instead, they changed the rules of the House. To do what? To give themselves the power to do exactly what they're doing now: to fix their incompetence, to fix up their bungles, as they're called, so they're able to pass these bills at the last minute, because they can't get their act straight when it comes to how to run a House in a democratic system.

I say to the government, on two points you've failed: You're totally undemocratic and incompetent when it comes to running the business of this House.

Mrs Julia Munro (Durham-York): I'm very pleased to offer a couple of comments in relation to the discussion today. The critical issue we're really discussing here is job creation, how it is that a government can provide the climate for job creation. Through this legislation and through a number of other initiatives, that's what we have undertaken and what we are delivering on in this province.

It becomes clear when you look at what the issues are. One of the very first issues was to deal with the need to reduce the cost of hiring. It became very clear that that put us in a most uncompetitive position. The opportunity to

decrease the workers' compensation premiums by 5% sent out a clear message that we were looking for opportunities to reduce the cost of hiring. We also have reduced the employer health tax by limiting it to those businesses over \$400,000 in payroll.

By reducing the personal income tax, we are making ourselves competitive and allowing the opportunity for people to invest in this province. It's through that investment that job creation comes. It's interesting to note that in this current year we're looking at a \$1.1-billion increase in personal income tax revenue.

The tax credits outlined in Bill 164 speak further to this issue of job creation, especially the opportunities it presents for young and creative Ontarians. In conclusion, I just want to add my comment that Bill 164 speaks very clearly to our goal of job creation.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): The problem the government has is that it puts what we call hostages in all these bills. There are always some items in the bills that are supportable. Some of the government members, if the opposition votes against it, will try to characterize it as a vote against certain provisions of the bill. But those who watch the legislative channel, millions in number now, will know that the problem is that the government includes in the bill many provisions about which people are concerned.

For instance, local councils in the Niagara region were all condemning, last night at their meetings, the aspect of this bill which censors the councils, which does not allow the councils to put on their tax bill the reasons for the increases that may be forthcoming. They've asked me to vote against the bill. They said, "Look, we understand there are some good things in the bill with which everybody might agree, but you can't agree with this bill unless the government amends it to take out the part that prohibits municipalities from putting the necessary information on the tax bill."

They're also concerned that this is again Mike Harris raising taxes. I mentioned 197 tax increases. I found out it's 198, because it says, "setting up new fees for appeals of tax problems." Once again, wealthy people will be able to appeal their taxes, but people of modest means will find it difficult to do so because of the financial requirements. That's contained in this bill.

The Province of Ontario Savings Office is going to be privatized, or at least the skid is being greased for its privatization under this bill, and I've had numerous telephone calls from people who said, "Please get the government to amend the bill so this doesn't happen." What could be a supportable bill is ruined by many negative provisions.

The NDP has the floor next.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Nepean has two minutes to respond.

Mr Baird: I'd like to thank the member for Kingston and The Islands, the member for Cochrane South, and the members for Durham-York and St Catharines.

The member for Kingston and The Islands said, "We're in favour of most sections of the bill." However, last night

in committee they voted against every section of the bill when they had the opportunity to vote in favour of any one section, which I found most interesting. When Bill 164 came for agreement in principle, every single MPP who wanted the chance to speak had the chance to speak. There was even time left over that people hadn't used. Every MPP had as much time to debate this bill as they wanted to, and they used it.

The member for Cochrane South will like this. I do want to comment that I saw the Leader of the Opposition on television last week. I like the Leader of the Opposition; he's a good fellow. He said he was seriously considering giving himself the power to appoint candidates in various ridings, just like Jean Chrétien. I guess on the advice of Matt Maychak and the other whiz kids in the Liberal leader's office, he wants to bypass the traditional, time-honoured democratic process of riding-by-riding nomination meetings. Matt Maychak and the leader of his party want to sit behind closed doors at their offices at Queen's Park and decide the futures of elected, sitting Liberal MPPs. They want the power to determine who wins and who loses in the redistribution process. They want to be able to take the right away from individual MPPs, riding associations and party members. It's absolutely astonishing.

Normally, with the NDP and the Conservatives, we can find out who wins the nomination by going to a nomination meeting. What you're going to have to do is sit with the media in a scrum outside Matt Maychak's office to find out who's going to be a Liberal candidate in the next election, because over there in the Liberal leader's office, in the Liberal Party, they don't trust the individual decisions of the riding association to democratically elect the candidates. We on this side of the House and our good friends in the New Democratic Party are going to be watching this process very carefully.

Mr Gerretsen: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would like your ruling on this matter. You may recall that the time allocation motion that was passed with respect to this bill said specifically that the finance and economic affairs committee would meet last night at 7 o'clock in the evening and without debate deal with each and every section.

We have just heard from the member for Nepean that they had debate at that committee hearing —

Mr Baird: Check Hansard. Check Hansard.

Mr Gerretsen: — and therefore they were in violation of the closure motion. I'm just wondering how you would rule on that, how we could allow debate when the motion clearly said that they shall be dealt with without debate. Is the bill therefore illegal? I would like to address this point to you and I'd like you to rule on that, and tell me whether the bill is illegal —

The Acting Speaker: Please take your seat so I can.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: I'm ready to now. Please take your seat.

If there was a problem about the procedure in committee, then it should have been brought up as a point of order

at that time and ruled on by the committee chairman and so on. I will not entertain that right now. It is not a point of order.

Further debate?

1550

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): I'd like to continue the debate on Bill 164. I would start by saying that I hope the public understand the chaotic process the government is following here. This bill was not allowed to be debated for any amendments — no amendments. I think the public should know the reason that this is important. The government put this bill before us on November 25. It's that thick. It amends literally dozens and dozens of acts here in the province. It is a huge bill.

I will just say there are serious, serious questions about freedom of information in this. This bill will provide virtually unlimited access to previously confidential information that will be available now to the private sector. The only information the government has that will not be available is your psychiatric records and your health records. Everything else will be available, with no protection.

The freedom of information office has not had a chance to comment on this, contrary to what we were told. We were told in a briefing that the freedom of information office had reviewed this and had no problem with it. We then phoned the freedom of information office and they said, "We have significant concerns with this," but they had the personal assurance of the deputy minister that this bill would be amended early next year, early in the new year. Well, the government has no intention of doing that. So I will say to the public: Last night we wanted an opportunity for the freedom of information commission to come before the committee and outline its concerns.

Here are three pages of proposed amendments from the freedom of information commission. This process we go through is a sham, a total sham. This bill is introduced and there is not one opportunity for any amendments to this bill. It's literally rammed through. We thought we at least had it going to committee so we could have an opportunity to amend the bill, and then the government used its hammer to say that as soon as it got to committee, it would be voted on and brought back here; no amendments, no changes, nothing. I say to the backbench members of the Conservative Party, surely to God you are not in agreement with this unfettered release of freedom of information — virtually unlimited.

We were told two things that frankly weren't true: first, that the freedom of information commission had already been consulted on this and was in agreement. We were told that at a briefing; that was not true. Second, when we phoned the freedom of information commission, they informed us that the deputy minister himself had assured them that the bill would be amended early in the year.

I say to the public, if you wonder why we get so angry in opposition, here is an example: a gross abuse of freedom of information; told at a briefing that the freedom of information commission had already approved it; and the

freedom of information commission told that the bill would be amended early in the new year.

Just read the bill. The only thing it doesn't include, as I said before, is an individual's medical, psychiatric or psychological history. Everything else is available. That can be everything from your business records to your driving records to your personal files, in any ministry.

The freedom of information commission went on to say: "We recommend the following sections be omitted from the authorized purposes for the processing of personal information...which permits the disclosure of personal information in privatization exercises."

The first thing I want to put on the table is that this bill should have been debated at committee and there should have been an opportunity for the freedom of information commission to appear before us.

Second, the senior officials from all the municipalities around Ontario, the most senior municipal bureaucrats, have raised the most serious concerns about this bill. They use language that none of us should be ignoring. I would say they fully expected an opportunity to come before the committee. As a matter of fact, they phoned and said, "We want to appear before the committee" — the clerks and treasurers, the senior people, the equivalent of the deputy ministers at the municipal level. "We want to appear before the committee because we've got serious concerns about Bill 164." What did the government do? They just completely shut them out. "Don't even show up. There will be no opportunity for you to comment on the bill."

I want to read some of the comments that the clerks and treasurers said about the bill, because nothing could be clearer. Mike Harris is determined to ram through his agenda. He doesn't care who gets in his way. The clerks and treasurers' organization says: "This will create an administrative nightmare for municipalities." This is talking about a part of Bill 164. "It could create a vehicle for those municipalities that work with the prescribed ratios and later discover the figures are unacceptable to demand assistance from the government. Either way, this is a recipe for administrative chaos."

For a government that says, "We run government like a business," you don't do it at all. This is the people who are running the business telling you you're going to create administrative chaos. But, no. You not only are unprepared to accept their comments; you will not even listen to them. This is absurd. Here we have a huge bill that will touch every municipality in the province and we have the senior bureaucrats crying out for an opportunity to comment on the bill and they are completely, totally silenced. They can't even come and present. It's obscene.

They went on to say, in their brief about this bill, Bill 164: "Surely this illustrates better than anything that this government, in its haste, is making legislation by the seat of its pants without proper thought or planning. Yesterday's bill is amended by today's, which is likely to be amended by tomorrow's."

I just say to the public, if you want a tangible example of how Mike Harris operates, it's this: Jam a bill in, throw it at the opposition, pass a rule in the House that says there

will be no opportunity for debate, no amendments permitted. Even when the opposition was successful in getting it sent to committee, rules were put in that the bill couldn't be amended. As soon as it arrived there, it was going to be voted on.

Mr Gerretsen: Not even debated.

Mr Phillips: Not even debated.

You get the clerks and treasurers, the people who are responsible for implementing this bill, saying to us language like this: "Administrative chaos"; "Surely this illustrates better than anything that the government, in its haste, is making legislation by the seat of its pants, without proper thought or planning."

So when the public wonders why we have significant problems with Bill 164, I say firstly that the freedom of information commission has signalled major concern. Not only that, I repeat again, but we had been told one thing and the truth was something else. We'd been told they were consulted; they weren't. They were told by the deputy minister that the bill would be amended early in the new year. It's not going to be, Mr Speaker.

Mr Bradley: We were prepared to come back in the new year to do that.

Mr Phillips: My colleague says we were prepared to come back. We were prepared to go to that committee and say to the clerks and treasurers, "Please come and tell us how this bill can be improved." The government shut them out totally, completely. Nobody could have given you clearer warnings about the chaos you're going to cause than this.

There is a provision in the bill that amends the Municipal Act, one of many amendments to acts in here, but it allows the Minister of Finance to change the property tax levels halfway through the year with the stroke of a pen. It's almost unconscionable for our municipal leaders that the property tax system now has been taken over by the province. As a matter of fact, the clerks and treasurers in their brief on the bill say about these changes: "We no longer have a municipal property tax system; we have a provincial tax system administered by municipalities. The province controls the education tax" — which is true — "it determines classes and subclasses of land, it allocates tax ratios and transition ratios, and now it will determine what goes on the tax notice."

1600

They go on to say, on the provision under the Municipal Act, that the minister halfway through the year can create chaos by changing it. The bills could already have gone out, but the minister could change it. They say:

"Furthermore, under subsection 18, schedule F, the Minister of Finance may by regulation prescribe new transition ratios. This will create an administrative nightmare for municipalities or could be a vehicle for those municipalities that work with the prescribed ratios and later discover the figures are unacceptable to demand assistance from the government."

What we have now is chaos with our municipal property tax system. Probably nothing demonstrated that more than Friday, where the government announced that it is

dumping on to property taxpayers \$590 million of brand-new expenses. To our business community, by the way, all the money you paid on education last year, in 1997, you'll pay again in 1998. The province has left all of that on business and added \$590 million on to property taxes. You can perhaps understand why in this bill the Minister of Finance is giving himself the authority to change these things again halfway through the year. That is why the clerks and treasurers have said this bill is creating administrative chaos. They're right.

Many of us have already had from our small business community —

Mr Bradley: They're up in arms.

Mr Phillips: They're up in arms, my colleague says. Our small business community has had dramatic increases in property tax demands from their landlords. Why? Because Mike Harris decided to get rid of the business occupancy tax and got a nice pat on the back for that, only for them to find out now that it's been all added back on to the commercial-industrial realty tax. Those who were paying high business occupancy taxes, say, the banks — I keep saying this, but it's true. Those five bank towers downtown that you see from these windows will have their property taxes reduced by \$3 million each. God bless the banks, and that's good for them, but who will pick up that \$15 million?

Mr Bradley: Small businesses.

Mr Phillips: Small business will, and there's no question of that. They're already getting their tax bills. I have a friend who has a small business, with 14 employees. His landlord has already said, "Your property taxes are going to go from \$44,000 to \$48,000," a 9% increase. That's going to happen. It's guaranteed to happen all around the province. Why? Because the government has not thought through the implications for small business. The clerks and treasurers warn us of the dangers ahead, with Bill 164 now giving the minister the power to set brand-new transition ratios.

I just say to our business community that if I were a businessperson in the province — and I used to be at one time — if I were a member of an organization, the CFIB or the chamber or the board of trade, I would be saying, "I want you to give me an analysis very quickly on what's going to happen with these changes."

We now have four bills. The director of the clerks and treasurers says, "The cumulative effect of Bills 106, 149," the two property tax bills, "160," the education bill, "and 164," the bill we're debating tonight, "is that we no longer have a municipal property tax system; we have a provincial tax system administered by municipalities."

I find that particularly interesting, because when it suits Mike Harris's purposes he will say: "We trust the municipalities. They are the group closest to the public. They're the ones who understand things best." I agree with him. They are. I was in municipal politics, as were many of my colleagues. My colleague Mr Gerretsen was the president of AMO. My colleague Mr Bradley was on the St Catharines council. Many from all parties would be on municipal councils. When it suits Mike Harris's purposes

he says, "I trust the municipalities," but now he doesn't. Now he's saying, "I know best."

I keep repeating this, but now the province is in charge and has taken over \$6 billion in property tax. For any business in the province, it's Mike Harris who will set the majority of your property taxes. A majority of your property taxes go to education, and Mike Harris and Mike Harris alone will determine that.

Unfortunately, he's determined that any inequities that were built in before are going to stay in there. I read Friday's announcement to mean that if Metro Toronto was raising \$700 million from business for education purposes, they'll continue to raise \$700 million, and if Kingston was raising \$50 million from businesses, they'll continue to raise \$50 million. But it will be Mike Harris and Mike Harris alone who will make that decision.

By the way, we'll never get a chance to debate that. None of that will be done here in the Legislature. It'll be done in the quiet of Mike Harris's office in a back room somewhere where they'll make that determination — no debate and no discussion.

I want to speak briefly on the gag components of Bill 164. Again I go back to Mike Harris in the old days. He said: "Municipalities I trust. They're close to the people." There's perhaps nothing quite as important as the communication between the council and its taxpayers when the tax bill goes out. That is the time of accounting for the council, where they're saying, "All right, taxpayers, we now are telling you to pay this amount," and they have the opportunity to describe why that is.

You can understand why Mike Harris put in this act this gag order. It says: "The minister may require that the notice be in a form approved by the minister. A municipality shall not vary the form unless the variation is expressly authorized by the minister." You must get written permission from Mike Harris. "The minister may, by regulation, prescribe the information that must or that may be included on the notice. A municipality shall not include other information on the notice unless expressly authorized to do so by the minister."

Now we've found out why they have that. On Friday, the municipalities got an enormous shock from Mike Harris. He said that this dumping or downloading exercise was going to be revenue-neutral and indicated that municipalities would not be suffering. Well, we've found now that it is not revenue-neutral. They're going to be adding roughly \$600 million on to property taxes. You can bet that the council in the city of London, the council in Kingston, the council in St Catharines yesterday, I gather from Mr Bradley —

Mr Bradley: Oh, they're unhappy.

Mr Phillips: They indicated that they would like to tell their taxpayers what the source of the problem is: It's Mike Harris. But this bill, of course, gags them. The only way they can deviate is with express written consent from Harris. I point that out as a concern in Bill 164.

As a side issue — not a side issue; I don't mean to underestimate the importance of it — there are substantial changes here to our provincial savings office. This

essentially says that any of the assets of the provincial savings office can be turned over to other financial institutions.

1610

Mr Bradley: Scandalous.

Mr Phillips: My colleague says, "Scandalous." We certainly shouldn't be making a decision to close our savings offices, which have been a well-respected institution in the province of Ontario for decades — we shouldn't be making that kind of decision as a two- or three-paragraph section of a 200-page bill that will be rammed through with no opportunity for amendments, no opportunity for witnesses to come before us to express their concern one way or another on it. There was not one minute given to any public input into this bill.

As I say, you insulted the clerks and treasurers of the province of Ontario, totally insulted them, when they are the ones who will carry the can for the government. They're going to be on the front line. They wrote to the government expressing serious concerns about this and they phoned and said: "We want to appear. We want to go to that committee." They were told: "No way. Don't show up. There will be no opportunity for you to even comment on the bill." As I say, when we arrived there it was: "We now will be voting on the bill. There will be no discussion on the content of the bill. We'll just be voting section by section by section."

So if anybody wants to know why we'll vote against the bill, just listen to this: freedom of information concerns that we were not told the truth about, serious freedom of information concerns; the whole issue of the clerks and treasurers in the strongest possible language saying that this bill is going to cause, to use their language, "administrative chaos" and "an example of flying by the seat of their pants"; the unprecedented gag order. Who has ever told municipalities what they can and cannot say when they send out their tax bill?

Mr Bradley: They won't tell Hazel.

Mr Phillips: My colleague said they won't tell Mayor McCallion from Mississauga. I guarantee you, she will tell her ratepayers know.

I would comment just briefly on the job numbers, because this bill is around job creation. I want to say again, if the government believes that the employment situation is just fine, then we have a bigger problem than I think. This document is from the Minister of Finance's office. This isn't some external document; it's produced right over in the minister's office. It was dated December 8, although we got it Monday, conveniently right after the minister's statement.

This is the youth unemployment, and it shows here that in 1995, when Mike Harris became Premier, the unemployment rate among our young people was 15.4%. In 1996 it was 15.6%. We are now 11 months through the year 1997: 17%. So we're going to end the year 1997 with an unemployment rate among our young people very close to 17%. We see the number of unemployed young people has gone from 142,000 to 143,000 to 159,000. All of us should look at that.

I say that it's not working. Our young people are bearing the brunt of the revolution, whether it be with the tuition fee increases that we saw announced by Mike Harris this week of 20% or whether it be with the cuts in support for our public and secondary schools.

By the way, just as an aside on this bill hurting young people, I have a major question around the contribution by the province to the pensions. When there was the Bill 160 debate, Mike Harris put out these statistics to prove Ontario maintains support for education. The big justification was: "We have increased our spending on pensions in 1996 to \$925 million and in 1997 to \$1.1 billion, and that's why spending on education has gone up."

Well, surprise, surprise. In the statement from the minister yesterday we find that spending on the pensions, instead of the reported \$925 million in 1996, was \$683 million — \$250 million less. Instead of the \$1.144 billion, we find \$555 million, almost \$600 million less.

There is something very strange going on where the government, when it was in the battle with the teachers, announced pension spending that was \$800 million higher than the numbers they now have in their budget. These, the ones that were \$800 million higher, are dated October 26, 1997.

Something funny happened between October 26 and the announcement made yesterday, where over a two-year period, pension spending was \$850 million less than the government reported. I remember very well that Mr Eves came down to the media studio and made a big deal about the spending going on. The operating spending had actually dropped; it was all the pension spending gone up. Now we find, surprise, surprise, in the budget over those two years, \$850 million less in the teachers' pension.

I think there'll be some questions asked on that. The reason I am particularly interested in it was that the root of the problem on the teachers' pensions goes back to 1975 when Bill Davis promised fully indexed pensions to teachers, all funded by the province, and never put a penny in it for 10 years. There was never a penny put in. That built up a huge, what's called an unfunded liability, and that created a significant problem. I know a little bit about it because governments were finally forced to recognize that that is a legal obligation that had to begin to be paid off, and the payments started in 1990. But \$850 million less a month and a half after these figures came out is reason for question.

The other thing I want to say on the job front, because this is interestingly called a tax credits to create jobs bill, although I repeat, the tax credits to create jobs bill has the assessment corporation set up in it where the province controls it and the municipalities pay for it; it has the freedom of information abuses that the freedom of information commissioner has indicated significant concerns about; it's got kind of unfettered rights for the minister to set tax ratios that the clerks and treasurers say will create administrative chaos.

On the job front the litmus test for me is two things: One is that Mike Harris said his plan would create 725,000 jobs. We now are halfway through that and the

government is 120,000 jobs behind target on that. I remember Mike Harris railing at the NDP: "There's half a million people out of work in the province of Ontario. That is awful. Something's got to be done about it." It is awful. But Mike Harris sat there and got at Bob Rae: "Half a million people out of work in the province. How can you live with yourself, Bob Rae?"

Again I say, I imagine all members get the same document I do, but you just take a look at it. This is the Minister of Finance's document, June 1995, 499,000 people out of work; November 1997, 502,000 people.

1620

Mr Baird: How many are working? Why don't you talk about that?

Mr Phillips: The member is talking about jobs created. Yes, there are jobs created. There are 120,000 fewer than Mike Harris promised. I remember this document because Mike Harris didn't even equivocate. He said this plan will create more than 725,000 jobs.

Mr Baird: In five years.

Mr Phillips: In five years. You're halfway through that now and you're 120,000 jobs behind and there are more people out of work —

Hon David Turnbull (Minister without Portfolio): We will create more than anyone else in Canada, Gerry.

Mr Phillips: Mr Turnbull is now going ballistic as he often does. I know I've touched a nerve, but I just say I remember Mike Harris, he was red-faced —

Hon Mr Turnbull: The feds are congratulating themselves —

Mr Phillips: Mr Turnbull's out of hand again. If he wants to speak, he'll have to put himself on the list, but he's red-faced over there. It wasn't me who made the promise, the 725,000 jobs.

I'll just show the people of Ontario again because Mr Turnbull doesn't want to see this. It's 499,000 people out of work when you became Premier, 502,000 now. They also promised 725,000 jobs and they're 120,000 behind that. So Mike Harris is failing, particularly the young people —

Interjections.

Mr Phillips: I know you don't want the public to hear this.

Hon Noble Villeneuve (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, minister responsible for francophone affairs): No, go ahead.

Hon Mr Turnbull: Tell us how many jobs you have created. I see you don't want to mention that.

Mr Phillips: Mr Turnbull's out of control again. He's going to just have to get himself under control.

Mr Bradley: I'm worried about his health.

Mr Phillips: His health, yes. I hope the public can see this. When Mike Harris became Premier, the unemployment rate among young people was 15.4%; now 17%. You are totally failing the young people of Ontario. In 1995 jobs, 781,000; in 1997, 773,000 — 9,000 fewer jobs. Unemployment: 14,000 more young people out of work. These aren't my numbers. They're your numbers. They're Mike Harris's numbers. There they are; just out.

Take a look at them. Don't buy these sort of little spin notes you get from Mike Harris's office. Keep the facts yourselves.

I would just say to the public that for a government that talks about running government like a business I have never seen a more disorganized group than this. Bill 164 introduced and then we find the clerks and treasurers — this is a group the public I think can have some real confidence in — saying about this government: "Either way, this bill is a recipe for administrative chaos." They go on to say: "Surely" — and these are the clerks and treasurers, and bureaucrats frankly are quite measured — "this illustrates better than anything that this government in its haste is making legislation by the seat of its pants without proper thought or planning. Yesterday's bill is amended by today's which is likely to be amended by tomorrow's." I don't think anyone could sum up the government better for us than that comment.

We're dealing with a government out of control: The education bill, out of control; the dumping, out of control; the property tax reform, out of control; hospital closing, out of control; youth unemployment, out of control. The only thing we see around here is Mike Harris covering up the problem and the people of Ontario increasingly seeing how desperate the problem is.

I call on my colleague from St Catharines.

Mr Bradley: I wish there were more time to be able to deal with this legislation. Particularly in committee I think it has to be pointed out to people that more and more people now are interested not only in the content of the legislation, but in the manner in which this government is moving forward. I will quote from an editorial from a newspaper not hostile to this government in a while about that idea of the manner in which the government implements its policies.

What people should know is that this isn't a bill about tax credits. This is a bill which includes some information about tax credits but has a lot of other components to it which are detrimental to the people of Ontario.

For instance, I mentioned that there was not time to debate this bill appropriately. The normal process we have is that there is the introduction of the bill, which is routine. That's first reading. At second reading, there's a full debate on the principle of it, and there was a debate on the principle of it. Because we're getting near the end of the session, the opposition wanted to provide some committee time for this bill. Instead of prolonging, as we could have, the debate on second reading, the opposition said: "We will be very reasonable. Let us go to committee. Let the government" — because the government had indicated it had some problems with the bill — "bring forward its amendments, the opposition will bring forward its amendments, and the members of the public who have a specific interest in aspects of this bill will be able to offer their suggestions on amendments." That was a very reasonable course of action.

Mr W. Leo Jordan (Lanark-Renfrew): What were you going to do in committee? The same thing you are doing here.

Mr Bradley: My friend from the Ministry of Agriculture knows how reasonable we can be on occasion, and we were so reasonable on this occasion, saying, "Let's go to committee." The member for Oxford likes committees, and he would say, "Here's a good chance for the government to put forward the amendments." Remember, the government was saying they had a few problems with the bill they wanted to fix up, and we wanted to help them out by doing that. As I've said, the opposition parties might consider voting for this bill if there were amendments which removed some of the offensive aspects of it.

I see one of the commissioners of crime coming in now. I'm going to ask him to investigate, because he, along with his two colleagues the member for London South and the member for Cambridge, I think, are called the crime commissioners, crimebusters. I'm going to call upon them to investigate this bill, because one aspect of this bill which is a crime is the fact that the government has not allowed amendments to be put in committee and clause-by-clause discussion of the bill. It simply went to committee and tried to rush it through committee without any consideration. I'm going to turn over to the crime commissioners a complaint about this particular matter, because that is a crime against democracy.

My friends on the opposite side do not want me to mention, I know, what my city council and other municipal councils are concerned about: the censorship aspect of this bill. Last night at St Catharines city council and Niagara city council and so on, the headline comes out, "Councils Rebuke Tories." On these councils are a number of people who probably voted for you in the last election, in good faith thought that maybe you could move the province in the right direction.

They're now saying, and you can see this, Mr Speaker — I hold it for you because I know you like to see these things — "Councils Rebuke Tories." "Government Downloading Deceit Prompts Protest Letters and Defiance from Niagara Politicians," says the subheadline. One member of St Catharines city council, a person who is a noted small-c conservative, a person who has on occasion been, I think unfairly, referred to as Dr Negative and Professor No, because he's an economics professor who has questioned every expenditure as it comes before city council, as members should — here's what he had to say about what was happening with the downloading. "'This represents the ultimate in deceit,' said St Catharines Councillor Joe Kushner." I would not use that terminology because that's out of order in the House, but that's what Councillor Kushner had to say. Let's put that aside.

There are others who have had things to say as well. Mayor Wayne Thomson of Niagara Falls had the following to say when he was told that his council could not put on the tax bill their evaluation of the reasons why there would be a tax increase. It says: "In Niagara Falls, Mayor Wayne Thomson vowed to defy any such prohibition and said he'll be sure his taxpayers understand any tax hikes. 'We're not going to abide by that,' said Thomson. 'We're going to make it very clear why this is happening.'"

1630

Niagara-on-the-Lake council also decided to protest the provincial cutbacks and will send a letter to the government. Councillors in St Catharines "agreed to ask the province to take note of the city's fiscal responsibility over the years and reconsider the funding allotment. Council also supported Councillor Kushner's motion to consider including a notice explaining the reasons for the tax increase with the property tax bill, something which may be prohibited by the provincial government."

Members of the government will say, "Why don't you ask them to put a letter in with it, then?" The problem with that is the following: Councils are trying to save money. They don't want to have to spend more money on another piece of paper. Many of them are environmentalists and they say: "Why would we have any additional paper? Why can't we just put this on the tax bill itself?"

I think that's reasonable, but I had to say to them, "I'll go to Queen's Park, I'll go to the Parliament building and I'll try to persuade the Conservative members to allow you to put this information on the bill, not to censor you," because I know they would be concerned about the environmental degradation that would take place by using more paper, unnecessarily so. Individual members would be extremely concerned, I'm sure, that there not be censorship, that there not be additional costs incurred by having to purchase more paper to include in the tax bill, I thought a good argument. What happened? I went into the committee where this bill was to be considered, and the government members had shut down any opportunity, by means of a closure motion, to have any such amendments put.

I know the councillors in the Niagara region, whether they're Conservative supporters or not, won't take this lying down. They were concerned. The headline, as I showed you, said, "Councils Rebuke Tories." Then I thought: "Maybe there's some good news in the paper. Maybe somebody else will be saying something good about the government." I looked, and it says, "Board Struggles With Budget: Provincial Downloading and Unforeseen Costs Leave Members Uncertain on Where to Cut Spending." That's the Niagara Regional Police Force. They're worried. I'm going to tell this to the commissioner; the crime commissioners, the three amigos, are going to have to investigate this. The police commission is in trouble with its funding because of the downloading from the provincial government. I think this is another matter for the commissioners to investigate. I'll be getting Bob Wood, Jim Brown and the member for Cambridge investigate this.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Order, Minister, and member for Nepean.

Mr Bradley: Here's a letter to the editor called "Letter of the Week." This is from the director of education, Niagara South Board of Education. The headline says, "School Board Boss: Tories' Management Record is Awful." I was startled to read that in the newspaper. I become concerned, because I know a lot of the trustees

used to be Conservatives, and they had a concern about this. I looked at that and said, "I'm trying to find some good news in the paper for the Conservative government."

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): What did Bob Welch's assistant say?

Mr Bradley: Carol Jones, who is the constituency assistant to Bob Welch, was physically ejected from a hearing in St Catharines as she tried to make a presentation on a piece of legislation, in that case Bill 160 — physically ejected. This is Bob Welch's former constituency assistant and one of the workers in the election for the member for Lincoln, Frank Sheehan. She worked out in Lincoln for Frank Sheehan —

Mr Gerretsen: Did Frank give them the wrong date for the meeting?

The Acting Speaker: Member for Kingston and The Islands.

Mr Bradley: She will be sending a letter, because I received a letter from her, to all members of the Legislature expressing her views. Perhaps I'll be able to share parts of it with members of the House; I don't think I will today.

Here's the St Catharines Standard, a Southam newspaper partially owned by everyone's favourite big owner, Conrad Black, the friend of the Harris government, constituent of the Honourable David Turnbull, we now call him, the chief government whip. You'll remember a television series about the chief government whip in Britain and the authority and control he exercised. I think that as he assumed this position he reviewed the tapes of that and is following that on this occasion.

Here's what the St Catharines Standard had to say today about the downloading. The headline for the editorial in this Black-owned newspaper said, "Semantics of Downloading Don't Obscure Sorry Truth." I'm going to share with members of the Legislature what it says. I'll read the whole thing because it says some complimentary things. I don't want to just take excerpts. I want to be fair. Where it says good things about you, I want you to hear those as well. It reads as follows:

"As the Ontario Tories continue their bold strokes towards rewriting the way all sorts of public services are administered and paid for, it has become apparent that the Harris government is painting itself into a corner of mistrust from which it will be unable to emerge before the next election.

"The problem is not so much the government's aims. The problem is the government's credibility, which this past weekend suffered another major blow when it finally revealed the startling cost of downloading.

"There is little doubt that many voters still endorse the premise of the Common Sense Revolution: reduce the government's role in and the administrative bulk of services and programs, and reduce the taxpayers' cost of sustaining those services. Overhauling some big, time-honoured institutions would give legislators the surplus needed to ease tax requirements and reduce Ontario's deficit and debt.

"It's a tough job. Achieving such an ambitious goal would be an enormous task for any party, and the Tories have had their share of problems getting from mission statement to real world, but the ballooning haemorrhage of public faith clearly stems from the autocratic contempt with which they go about implementing change.

"For Niagara taxpayers the latest seeds of discontent came Friday, when Queen's Park revealed the funding formula for downloading — just 19 days before municipal governments inherit the full cost of such services as public transit, social housing, public health, ambulances, and sewer and water. In return, the province picks up such considerable expenses as education and health care.

"For months now, senior members of the Harris government, Premier included, have insisted this whole exchange would be 'revenue-neutral' and would not result in the need for property tax increases. Over the past few days, cabinet generals Eves and Leach have continued to preach that, through temporary stopgap bridging grants and still deeper budget cuts by municipalities, there should be no reason for property taxes to go up.

"But as we learned in Friday's bombshell, the government's definition of 'revenue-neutral' seems to accommodate a shortfall in Niagara of about \$25 million in funding for those programs. Ratepayers will inevitably face not only tax increases, but cuts in some services, and bigger user fees for others.

"This government lied to Ontario" — I don't know if we can say that, Mr Speaker. You'd better check with the table. I'm reading from an editorial and the editorial says that this government lied to Ontario. What is the ruling on that? I have to find that out. See, I'm trying to be fair. I'm trying to see what the rule is. I'm not saying this; I'm reading the editorial. What is the ruling?

The Acting Speaker: I think it's somewhat out of order.

Mr Bradley: Okay. It's somewhat out of order.

The Acting Speaker: Unfortunately, I wasn't paying attention, but it's out of order.

1640

Mr Bradley: I will tell the people at the St Catharines Standard that while they can print this, we can't read this in the Ontario Legislature. That seems strange. I will go on.

"Their 'tax cut' is a tax transfer to the local bill. They may not have known the exact downloading numbers for different cities, but if the Tories were doing any homework on downloading, they obviously knew that the approach could not work without either tax hikes, substantial user fees, crumbling roads, service cuts, or all of the above. But for months they have opted to pretend otherwise.

"A government interested in making this policy succeed — and it can succeed — would have been willing to demonstrate a bit of leadership and work with municipalities on a completed downloading strategy before implementing it. But the government has maimed itself again by short-circuiting the democratic process. The Tories are not in the habit of seeking input from affected parties — mayors,

doctors, teachers, hospital unions — before ordering a shotgun wedding.

"In being short-sightedly deceitful" — they say "deceitful"; I can't use that — "about the cost of downloading, the Tories were also politically foolish. As they disenfranchise themselves even further from their core support of traditional fiscal Conservatives who deplore tax hikes, it increasingly seems that this government's cynicism is eliminating its chances of being re-elected.

"It is the lack of integrity in the downloading exercise that reveals a character flaw which we find very troubling: a government's willingness to mislead its constituents in order to achieve its political goals."

That's their opinion. As I say, we in this House have rules that we cannot use — but that's the St Catharines Standard.

You'll notice the editorial tried to be balanced. It tried to say the St Catharines Standard editorial board agreed with some of what you are doing. I can't say I do. What they said in effect was, if you're going to have a transfer of responsibility from one level of government to the other, it should make sense as to what items you transfer to the local government and which go to the provincial government.

I don't think that is the argument, about whether there should be a shift of some of those responsibilities. It may make sense. Many municipal politicians over the years have said that they would like to see more of the cost of education assumed by the provincial government, and it would make sense with some hard services if it were revenue-neutral. In other words, if it didn't cost the municipality any more or necessitate deeper cuts for municipalities, they would be prepared to go along with it.

There's an editorial which I think characterizes one of the things wrong with what the government is doing with Bill 164.

Bill 164, by the way, in case some of the government members, because they're so busy, may not have had a chance to read through its entirety, makes amendments to the famous Bill 160. That's because the government didn't want to open Bill 160 up for further debate and discussion. They were busy ramming through yet another closure motion closing off, choking off debate on that bill. So they used another bill to make amendments to Bill 160, and indeed to Bill 149 and to Bill 106. I think most people would say that's sloppy.

Here's what the municipal clerks and treasurers had to say about Bill 164. They're neutral people. They're not Liberals or Conservatives or New Democrats or something else. I quote from them:

"The cumulative effect of Bills 106, 149, 160 and now 164 is that we no longer have a municipal property tax system. We have a provincial tax system administered by municipalities. The province controls the education tax, it determines classes and subclasses of land, it allocates tax ratios and transition ratios. And now it may determine what will go on the tax notice."

They are concerned about that. They would say, "If this is going to happen, don't censor us." Didn't we abolish the

ensor board in Ontario some time ago? I think we now have a film review board. This old censor board is gone and now we have a new censor provision contained in this piece of legislation.

It also allows the minister to change, as I mentioned, these property taxes. It allows for setting up new fees for appeals of tax problems. There's Mike Harris again raising taxes. Remember when Mike Harris said — and I agree with him. My friend the chief government whip will remember this well. I don't always disagree with Mike Harris. I agreed with him when he said that a user fee is a tax, and here I see that the bill is setting up new fees for appeals of tax problems.

I'm going to have to review the number of tax increases I've seen this government responsible for. Today I had it up to 198 I've counted. I've had people tell me, "You've got to spend more time looking at this because you've missed several tax increases that have been the responsibility of this government." Indeed, I probably have. So I see yet another tax increase.

Let me tell you about the Province of Ontario Savings Office. This is a successful financial operation which serves the needs of people who want a certain kind of service: a very personable service, somewhere where you can speak to people. Maybe they don't have some of the additional services banks provide, but their depositors are satisfied. Now, because it moves, the government wants to privatize it.

Every time the government privatizes something, there's a lineup of friends of the government waiting to make some money on the privatization. The problem is, we don't have any legislation. The judge from Ottawa-Rideau would know this and he would be concerned about this. There is not a bill available which would govern lobbying and people who could have a conflict of interest when the privatization takes place.

Privatization is another debate, but if you're going to do it, you should have that kind of legislation in place before it happens. With his legal background, he would be very helpful in drawing up some of the legislation. They should have listened to you. They should have canvassed some of the people with a legal background and said, "Let's put this in place before privatization," to allay the concerns of those who might believe that there would be somebody out there benefiting, that there would be people rubbing their hands saying: "Oh, I can't wait until the government privatizes the LCBO," or, "I can't wait for those charity casinos, to get money out of those," something like that, or the Province of Ontario Savings Office.

The government has been negligent in not bringing forward that conflict-of-interest legislation, that lobbying legislation which was promised several months ago but didn't hit the top of the docket. I would have been prepared to see that passed this session. I say that to the chief government whip, how reasonable I want to be. I would have been pleased to see that passed.

So the government has a bill. It's 200 pages long. The government is ramming it through the Legislature this week. My concern is that, not satisfied with that, the gov-

ernment has yet two more time allocation motions — which I believe are out of order, but that's another point — which seek to take five bills — it was six bills previously — put them all into one motion and ram them through the Legislature. Each of those bills, and there's a little bit of similarity there, has not come before the House before. There's been no debate on them at all. They are called red tape bills.

The opposition never likes time allocation or closure motions, but if you have a bill that's been debated a long time and has gone through several stages, while we may object to a time allocation motion, more objective people than those in the House might say, "Well, that's reasonable; it's had a lot of debate," and it might be reasonable after a certain period of time to impose that time allocation motion. But these red tape bills that the government now wants to ram through the House this evening have not even been called for consideration. They are going to simply sweep them through the House with a big broom.

The St Catharines Standard has said it; the political representatives in Niagara, \$25 million short, have said it: Bill 164 has provisions which are unacceptable.

The Acting Speaker: Questions or comments?

1650

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): Mr Speaker, I want to thank you for the opportunity to comment on the comments of the member for St Catharines, who spoke very clearly and eloquently about the concern we have with Bill 164, which is before us here this afternoon, but even more particularly about the context in which this bill rolls out and comes at us, the undemocratic nature of the way this stuff is being rammed through. We have two days left in this place, and I think there are some 80 bills yet to be passed and no room for debate, discussion, no respect whatsoever for the processes we've put in place in this province over a large number of years to make sure that everything we do is in the best interests of the people of Ontario, that everything we do reflects a common interest in this place and the common good.

There are so many members across the way who have spoken in this place over the last two or three weeks to indicate to us where they stand on that kind of behaviour: 100% behind it, 100% in support of it. The member for St Catharines very clearly pointed out, and he chose his own area in Niagara and some of the newspapers printed down there and the editorials that are being written to indicate to us how the people of your jurisdiction, your constituency, your community are feeling about all of this.

I think it's rather shameful — a bit of an overused word in this place — that you don't take your responsibility a lot more seriously and come here to speak on behalf of the people you represent and to speak in this place about their concern, their fear and anxiety, because it's everywhere, it's all over the place. It's not just in Sault Ste Marie, Manitouwadge, Sudbury and St Catharines; it's everywhere. It's in every community, on every street, in every home in this community: anxiety up to the eyeballs. You guys will be responsible and you'll take the hit, believe me.

Hon Mr Turnbull: First of all, in responding to the Liberals' comments, I would put the counterpoint, and this is from Joe Cordiano, who was very recently the deputy leader of the provincial Liberal Party. His comment yesterday about the economic statement from Mr Eves was:

"'The province is doing very well,' veteran Liberal MPP Joe Cordiano said yesterday. 'Revenues will be way up, and the deficit will be on the way down,' he said of Eves's economic fall statement."

I think at least one member of their party is able to recognize the truth here. The Liberals are the party that went to the electorate after three years — 33 tax increases they put through to the poor people of this province. Inflation was being driven out of this province. Ask all of the western premiers; they were complaining to the federal government at the time about the inflation that was occurring as a result of the out-of-control Liberals.

They went to the electorate after three years. They had a massive majority and yet after three years they knew the economy was shaky because of all those tricks, like pre-flow, where they took revenues that should have been recognized in the following year and recognized them that year, and the expenditures they should have recognized in that fiscal year they put off till the following year, and the NDP had to end up eating it. This is their idea of economics. They only understand increasing expenditures and playing shell games.

This government is prepared to take the tough actions which sometimes don't make you popular but are in the best interests of the poor taxpayers of this province so that our children have a future.

Mr Gerretsen: Sir, you could teach us all about playing shell games, because you are the government that is giving the well-off people in this province a tax cut and is at the same time increasing property tax rates. Let's not forget the fact that you've had 198 tax increases through user fees over the last two years.

I want to quote very quickly from a letter we received from Carol Jones, which my colleague the member for St Catharines referred to. This lady says:

"Since 1961, I have performed every necessity that would ensure the election of a specific political party in the province of Ontario. I have...stuffed envelopes, licked stamps, phone banks. I gave my total commitment to the Progressive Conservative Party."

"As of 1995, I now know, I owe an apology to many citizens of various areas throughout the Niagara region, who I asked to support the Common Sense Revolution. From my reading of the Common Sense document I understood there would be 'no cuts to health or education.'..."

"The Common Sense Revolution has turned out to be pure unadulterated horse manure."

"The Premier and his sitting members at Queen's Park must remember, what was elected in 1995 in Ontario was supposed to be the Progressive Conservative Party" —

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order. That's not the type of language which is accepted in the House. You know that.

Although you're quoting, you're saying it in an indirect fashion, and I don't accept it. Please.

Mr Gerretsen: Speaker, I am just —

The Acting Speaker: No argument. I don't accept it, period.

Mr Gerretsen: And I accept what you're saying, sir. Since I now only have 27 seconds left, I will simply quote the last paragraph:

"I would also like to advise the Premier his partnership with the Reform Party has been a tremendous success. The Reform Party has already started selling themselves to organizations in the Niagara region as a viable alternative. Congratulations."

It would behoove all of us who have got a copy of this letter, and I know we all do, to read it carefully because this lady has it right on —

The Acting Speaker: Your time has expired.

Mr Wildman: I want to congratulate my friend from St Catharines for his comments in describing the editorial remarks that have been issued as a result of the down-loading of this government on the municipalities of the Niagara region and his general description of the reaction of the members of his community to the government's actions.

I was actually present at the incident when Ms Jones rose to make her intervention in the hearing on Bill 160 and where she was actually escorted out by two very burly plainclothes OPP officers. She made it very clear that for most of her adult life she had worked for the Progressive Conservative Party and that she felt this party, this government, had betrayed her, that she would no longer work for this party. She considered it regressive, not progressive, a Reform Party rather than a Progressive Conservative Party as she knew it under Bill Davis and John Robarts.

While we can't use the language, Speaker, that she used in her letter, I saw the anger in her eyes, the disappointment in her eyes, about what this government is doing. Her comments and then the comments made just a moment ago by the member for York Mills remind me of the quote from Jesse Helms. I never thought I'd be quoting Jesse Helms, but when he was asked to comment about the neo-conservative Republicans who were elected in the last congressional election, he said, "Well, you know, them boys are sometimes wrong but they're never in doubt." This government is never in doubt. They're often wrong, but they're never in doubt. That's what this government is about and that's why Ms Jones rejected them.

The Acting Speaker: Response?

Mr Bradley: Thank you very much for the opportunity to respond. I appreciate all the comments from the various members, some of which were relevant to my remarks and some which were totally irrelevant. That's the way the House operates, and that's fine. But I notice that none of the government members got up to object to the time allocation motion, first of all, and the fact that this government has a terrible record now of bringing forward time allocation motions.

I didn't hear them express their apprehension that the government now wants to completely destroy the House by bringing in a time allocation motion which will take five bills from unrelated ministries, place them in one motion, and give virtually no debate on them. None of those bills has been called for debate in this House. So the government is just taking them off the shelf, putting them before the Legislature in one motion and wanting to sweep them away. My view is that would be out of order; if not out of order, highly unethical. I frankly don't think you'll get away with it. If I were to make a prediction, I would say that the people of Ontario would be outraged by this government endeavouring to do that.

I didn't hear any of the government members get up to object to that. I thought they might have done so, because it's in the interests of all parliamentarians for this not to happen.

With this bill, I didn't hear any member of the government get up to say they objected to the censorship of our local municipal representatives, censoring them from placing on the tax bill information that they believe would be relevant. I know, whether it's in Port Colborne or St Catharines or Fort Erie or Niagara Falls, that all these people want to be able to inform the electorate why their taxes are going to go up. If they're going to have to spend more money now on paper, that's going to cost them more money and it's going to be environmentally undesirable to do so.

1700

Mr Wildman: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I hope all members would join me in welcoming the member for Dovercourt.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Gilles Pouliot (Lake Nipigon): Let me begin by informing the House that I will be sharing the time available to our caucus with our House leader, the member for Algoma, and also the member for Sault Ste Marie.

We find ourselves with very little time to debate and very little time left when addressing Bill 164. A short while back the government recognized the error of its ways and had very little time, so they decided to invent a process under the heading "omnibus." You see, they made so many mistakes on the bill dealing with education. Bill 160 was very controversial. They came up and were turned back at the door with draft amendments. It was sloppy work. They did the profession, they did the education system in. But it was not enough.

In their haste to complete the vindictiveness, they have to come up before January 1 with some additions, some amendments, some more rules and regulations. On the downloading bill — you know what I'm referring to because your taxes are about to be impacted negatively where you live, Speaker, like millions of other hard-working taxpayers in Ontario. They screwed up on Bill 149 rather big time, and on other bills.

When you look at Bill 164, it's 199 pages, and it's called sort of a tax relief, job creator. There are some minor adjustments, incentives for mainly the small business community in the first nine or 10 pages of the bill. If

you look at the overall agenda, they are not of a consequential nature. They're rather minor. But what is very impacting, very consequential is the remaining 190 or so pages in Bill 164.

What they have done, simply put, because they don't believe in debating, they don't believe in bringing matters to committee and inviting the general public, Ontarians, to come and debate and exchange ideas — that's the way you build programs, that's the way you build legislation. Then you go through regulation, and you've heard lots during those public hearings, and you give the regulatory body the oxygen to put the bill, the law, alive.

But the Common Sense Revolution is not a very strong believer in participatory democracy. Bien au contraire, quite the contrary. They are a unit, a government, a regime in a hurry. Beware; by way of participating, by way of public hearings, by way of sharing ideas, you will be deemed, you will be seen to get in the way.

They've fast-tracked the legislation. Those bills must be in place by January 1, 1998. We've just witnessed the downloading extraordinaire, the devolution, the reluctance from the present government to assume their responsibility; \$590 million of new costs from the province to the municipalities. It's your responsibility now, small towns, hamlets, villages, unorganized territories, medium-sized cities, large cities. You will pay because their program, the Common Sense Revolution, makes mention of a tax break mainly for those who can get by without it, mainly for the rich, the most fortunate.

Mr Bradley: A tax gift.

Mr Pouliot: A tax gift of \$5.4 billion. And they call themselves fiscally responsible. This is a government that, each and every hour of every day, borrows, not only in Canada but internationally, \$624,000 more than they take in. That's what they spend, all with borrowed money. Does it make any sense to you that when all is said and done the provincial debt in a time of so-called recovery will have gone up by more than 20%? Is this good fiscal management? Does that make sense to you?

The Honourable Ernie Eves, Minister of Finance, tabled the Ontario Economic Outlook and Fiscal Review. I have it right here. This is not my document. I'm merely the critic for our party. This is the official document of the government of Ontario through the auspices, the tutelage, the responsibility of the Minister of Finance, M. Ernie Eves. This is what he informed the House yesterday: Despite the government's actions to date, the public debt in Ontario will be over \$117 billion once the deficit — hopefully — is eliminated. This is what he's saying. The debt will be over \$117 billion because we all have to pay for your mismanagement, Minister of Finance. This is your responsibility.

Public debt interest in 1993-94 was \$7.129 billion; in 1994-95, \$7.832 billion. Since they took office, it went from \$7.8 billion to \$8.4 billion to \$8.6 billion, and the outlook for 1997-98 — their figures, their admission — \$9.086 billion. Unbelievable, \$2 billion more than in actual year 1993-94. They pride themselves, they pat themselves on the back saying, "We are good adminis-

trators." At the same time they download on the teachers, download on civil servants — they fired 14,000 of them — kids are doing without supplies. You saw the bus shelter on your way to work today — it's grab a number, sir — more homeless; poverty among young people, unemployment in the age group from 16 to 24. It's plainly catastrophic.

They say we're having a recovery. Yes, a recovery and a tax break for winner take all, not for the middle class on this eve of Christmas. They're being left twisting in the wind, filled with fear, filled with anxiety as to their future. If you're a student about to enter post-secondary education and you wish to have access to a house of excellence where you can arm yourself with knowledge, give yourself the tools to defend and "integrate" in our economic society and future, you are out of luck. Your fees are about to go up between 5% and 10% on top of the 10% last year and the 10% the previous year.

Speaker, have you had enough? I have had enough with the Common Sense Revolution. They can plainly stick it in their ear. This is not the way to go about prosperity. Each day it's the final straw. The trumpets, the fanfare, said \$590 million.

Interjection.

Mr Pouliot: No, they didn't say this. Their communiqué to their commissars of publicity — oh, Izvestia and Pravda would have been proud — is in the same style of: "This is revenue-neutral. This is what we'll do. You will be responsible for a whole range of services, but hey, you'll like it. Try it. It's not going to cost you anything." They call it local services realignment.

I have Manitowadge here. I live in that small community of some 3,200 Ontarians. Social assistance, child care, public health, ambulances, social housing, children's aid society, property assessment, transit — we don't have transit, so we don't — what am I saying? Hold it. I haven't seen it, but it's another \$17 million. Septic inspections, policing, \$489 million. Then they say, "Net change: Zero." But what they say is savings in 1998 equal to 1.7% of own purpose spending. This is the last straw. You do the savings. You lose the weight, not me.

Last week I bought 100 shares listed on the Toronto Stock Exchange. I bought 100 shares at \$1. This week I sold the same 100 shares at the same price, at \$1. So my broker Harry says: "Mr Pouliot, you broke even. It's revenue-neutral." I get the bill, but if I'm in Toronto there's a 4.2% commission, if I'm in a smaller town there's a 3.2% commission, and if I live in Manitowadge my broker only charges me 1.7% commission. If I keep breaking even, I'll end up in the poor house as a destitute. Maybe that's where they want me.

This is the way they run the books of Ontario, and if you say it loud enough, if you say it often enough, there will be some takers. Some people will believe that Mike Harris and other merchants of fear and anxiety are telling the truth, for you have to believe someone.

Thank heaven for the opposition, that we still, in our constitutional monarchy, after many vain efforts, have some voice. Time has been taken away from us, along

with many other long-standing rules benefited by all through tradition. But when they came in with the determination, with their manifesto, their agenda, they saw that time was to be a problem just as much as Her Majesty's loyal opposition made up of both the Liberals and the New Democrats.

The clock was ticking and the conductors that they hire reached in their side pocket and said, "The trains have to run on time," and now the watch will go back in the pocket because they know they still have to call an election some time.

Why not tell the truth? Why not try it? It might just work. Maybe people would have better expectations of their representatives. What's wrong? It helps the memory. All you have to remember is the truth. But when you play vulgar shell games with the lives of people, people who believe in the institution, it is not very healthy.

This is simple: \$5.4 billion has to be made up. What do you do? They've done it. You start with those who don't have much of a voice — and you will see them around, the less fortunate, les marginalisés — and then you move up the proverbial food chain, except this time it's real, and you go after the public servants, because you have declared them "the enemy." You put a big tag on them and you cultivate that, and you go after them.

Then you go after your most educated in the province, 126,000 community leaders. No other group so large has more responsibility, but you go after them. Oh, you forget from time to time some of the élite, and I know we need them, the medical profession. In their case, you wrestled them to the ceiling. You see, they do quite well. You made a deal with them. Then you keep going after the middle class, and on and on. Vous connaissez le reste, the remainder of this sad legacy.

Then, after January, they will try to forget: "Don't leave. Don't leave with the children. I will stop doing what I do to you." It will be the "loves me, love me not" again. It will not work. The abuse has been of such magnitude, how can anyone forget what they have systematically done in their constant effort to benefit those who already have the most?

Needless to say, we will be voting against Bill 164 with all the sincerity and effort that our small numbers, with the Liberals, command. We have no illusions. At the end of the day, the majority muscle will one more time prevail and the Common Sense Revolution will win at the expense of common sense.

I said at the beginning that I would be sharing the time with two of my most distinguished colleagues, and I shall do so.

Mr Wildman: I want to join the debate. I was just reminded by my friend from Lake Nipigon, when he referred to Izvestia and Pravda, of an old Soviet joke. For those of you who may not know, in Russian "pravda" means truth and "izvestia" means news. It really is apropos of what my friend was saying about this government's news releases, because the joke in Russian was, "There's no news in truth and there's no truth in news." That really does apply to this government's press

releases and communiqués around the downloading to the municipalities. The revenue-neutral mantra that this government keeps singing is just plain silly. The fact is that the revenue neutrality is predicated upon the municipalities making cuts. That's the only way it works, so it is not revenue-neutral in any way, shape or form. If the municipalities are able to make the cuts, they will not have to raise taxes, that's true, but it's not revenue-neutral. This government continually says "revenue-neutral, revenue-neutral," as if their brains were in neutral.

The fact is this: The government is downloading services and costs to the municipality. They have cut the unconditional grants, and now they're saying to the municipalities, "You have to cut some more." The small municipalities have been told they have to cut 1.7% of their budget, and the government is saying: "That shouldn't be difficult. They should be able to do it." The fact is that it is not revenue-neutral, yet the members of the government continually say "revenue-neutral, revenue-neutral." It's sort of like a chant that if they say it often enough, they'll actually believe it themselves. But in fact it's not correct, it's not true. So there is no news in truth and no truth in news as far as this government's communications go.

1720

Bill 164, which is time-allocated and which we are now debating, is a demonstration of what this government does when it is in such a hurry to ram legislation through that it is prepared to risk making mistakes for the sake of speed. This bill is characterized as a tax bill in that it makes changes in a number of tax regimes for business, largely small business. But it also has in it incorporated a number of other things that are an indication of what happens when the government goes in too much of a hurry. Obviously, this Bill 164, which was only introduced in the House in late November, was introduced prior to the passage of Bill 149 and Bill 160, and this Bill 164 includes in it amendments to those pieces of legislation.

It is completely irresponsible for a government to move legislation through so quickly and not to allow any amendments to legislation, and then to find that there need to be amendments later and to actually bring in new legislation to amend it. What the government should have done is taken the proper time and care to deal with Bills 149 and 160 in a way that could have led to themselves making improvements on the bill rather than just saying, "We're going to pass them and get them through as quickly as possible."

To time-allocate this legislation, which was only introduced in late November, is an indication of the abuse that this government is willing to move to in order to move its agenda forward and to shackle the members of the opposition and make it difficult for them to speak on behalf of their constituents and those who may have questions and concerns about the legislation.

As has been said in this House, this bill is 199 pages. It enacts a number of corporate tax breaks and it creates a property assessment corporation to facilitate the download or the privatization of assessment work which is currently

done by the Ministry of Finance. As I said, stuck in the middle are some amendments to Bill 149 and to Bill 160.

As one other member said in this debate earlier, with this government it's better to look at legislation at the back and go to the front than to start at the front and go to the back, because usually at the back you find what the bill is really about. In the back of this bill is what is called appendix G, which sets up the Ontario Property Assessment Corp. The assessment work which is currently done by 1,700 members of the public service will now be downloaded and privatized under this new corporation. But it's not a crown agency and there's no indication of what's going to happen to these 1,700 employees.

The municipalities will have to pick up the tab for this work starting in January 1998, a couple of weeks from now, yet they will have no say in the operation of this corporation. In other words, once again the municipalities are being given by this government the costs, without being the boss.

It's interesting that David Crombie, who was the appointee of the government under the Who Does What process, stated, "Transferring assessment should occur when the revised assessment system has been stabilized," not when you're in the middle of it, as we are now. Mr Crombie said, "Moving sooner could jeopardize the accuracy and quality of the assessments and undermine the integrity of the process."

This is a government that is going to ignore Mr Crombie's advice and move forward, despite the fact that the integrity of the assessment process, the basis of our property tax system, will be jeopardized, according to Mr Crombie, who has tremendous experience in municipal affairs and in government generally and was appointed because of that experience to give advice to the government. The government simply cherry-picks and chooses that advice it wishes to follow and ignores the rest.

In our view, these issues raised by Mr Crombie deserve close study, and that's why we said when this bill was introduced that it should go to a committee for public hearings. In this House, when we were debating this bill, Bill 164, on second reading, at the end of the second reading debate 12 members of the House stood to order the bill to a committee so we could have hearings and deal with the issues raised by Mr Crombie, among others.

The Minister of Finance said the committee that should deal with it should be the standing committee on finance and economic affairs. We thought there was going to be an opportunity for the employees who are currently doing the work, the people who know assessment in the province, for the municipalities and people interested in property values, which would probably be most of the taxpayers in the province, to actually have the opportunity to appear before a committee and raise concerns and questions that would be dealt with by the committee.

And yet, what happened? Almost immediately after the bill was referred to committee by the Minister of Finance, the government House leader brought in a time allocation motion which we are now debating.

Mr Baird: No, we're not. It's third reading.

Mr Wildman: We're debating third reading as a result of the time allocation motion. That time allocation motion did include the committee. We've objected in the past when time allocation motions haven't allowed for committee, but this matter had been referred to committee so it had to deal with the committee.

But what did it instruct the committee to do? It didn't say: "Hold hearings for two or three days." It didn't say: "Do clause-by-clause over a period of a couple of days." It didn't give a time limit by which time amendments should be tabled. The time allocation motion said that immediately upon sitting last evening at 7 o'clock, the committee should begin to vote to refer the bill back to the House immediately.

It circumvented the committee work. It thwarted the wishes of the House. It made a sick joke of the whole committee process and rule 71(c) of our standing orders, which gives individual members the right to attempt to refer issues and bills to committee. Twelve members, if they stand, as a minority, can refer a bill out to a standing committee.

This time allocation motion effectively renders standing order 71(c) mute. It has no meaning any more. The rights of the members of the House to refer matters to committee are irrelevant now because they no longer have any impact or effect. So much for these new rules that this government touted as rules that would give individual members more say. The justification for the government moving forward on the rule changes was that individual members had to have more say.

In this particular rule, 71(c), individual members do have a say. They have the right to affect the process by moving a bill out to committee. This time allocation motion is precedent-setting in that it simply meant the committee was perfunctory. It had no real effect, no impact, it didn't allow for any amendments. A bill that is 199 pages, this government would have us believe, is perfect and doesn't need to have any real scrutiny, doesn't have to be investigated, each clause doesn't need to be looked at, doesn't need any amendment.

Talk about arrogance. It isn't wise, because we see that in this bill itself they're attempting to fix up two other bills they had time-allocated and rushed through the House, Bill 149 and Bill 160. Mark my words, I suspect that in the spring session when we come back there will be legislation that will be amending Bill 164 because this government rushed it through without any real scrutiny, without clause-by-clause. Some bureaucrat in the Ministry of Finance within a couple of months will notice: "Hey, wait a minute. We've got this clause in here and it doesn't do what we thought it was going to do. It's messed it up. We'd better bring in a bill to amend it."

1730

What will happen? I suspect in June, near the end of the spring session, the Treasurer will suddenly table a bill two weeks before the end and say, "We've got to have this in effect before July because we messed up on Bill 164 and we need to fix it up." Then the government will say to the opposition, "Well, we know it's unreasonable to expect

you to have to act on this in only two weeks, but we must have this in effect because if we don't, the sky will fall in because the Ministry of Finance has screwed up once again." That's what will happen.

What's coming to an end is the rights of members in this House to effect the parliamentary and legislative process, and that is most unfortunate for the democracy of this province.

The other things that's been raised is appendix F, if we're moving backwards in this bill. Appendix F has been debated, and I won't go on at length, but I will just remind members that appendix F censors the tax bills of the municipalities. It prevents the municipalities from putting on the tax bills an explanation of the reason why there have been cuts or there have been tax increases.

The government argues no, that if they want to, they can put an additional piece of paper in the envelope explaining that, at greater expense to the ratepayers of the municipalities. Of course the reason the government wants to do this censorship of the tax bills is because they don't want most people to see it. They don't want people to know that they're going to have a property tax increase because of the downloading done by this government. For the first time in my memory, a government of Ontario is telling the municipalities they don't have the right to inform their ratepayers in a straightforward manner the reason for the tax increases they are experiencing.

We are opposed to Bill 164. We're opposed to the time allocation motion. We're opposed to the process this government is using. We're opposed to the suggestion that this government doesn't believe that committees should have the right to scrutinize bills and to amend bills and hold the government accountable. We're opposed to the subversion of the democratic process that this time allocation motion represents in this House and, for that reason, my colleagues and I will be voting against this bill at third reading.

Mr Martin: I too appreciate the opportunity to say a few words about this bill at this time in the history of this government, another example of their action to ram legislation through and then have to pick up the pieces later.

Bill 164, the Tax Credits to Create Jobs Act, 1997: Excuse me if I feel a wave of cynicism coming over me when I read the name of that bill.

Mr Pouliot: Oh, Tony, you are the last person —

Mr Martin: I know it doesn't happen to me often. I'm not the cynical type. It's not my nature to be cynical or negative. I'm usually fairly positive and willing to go the distance to lend someone the benefit of the doubt. But in this instance, after so many bills that have come into this House named to speak of some great thing that's going to happen once it's applied and the order of the day, only to turn around and to find out that it in fact is a Trojan horse and inside are all kinds of malprocesses and effort to make sure that one of just a small number of things happen in this province. One is that the ability of government to play an important role in the life of the people who choose to call Ontario home is diminished, an effort to make sure that the government is not spending money in those places

that give to the people of Ontario the kind of decent living that they have come to expect over the years and a bill, at the end of the day, to return to those who are most wealthy among us a tax break for which they have not worked and which they do not need.

This is an omnibus bill, jammed with items that have very little to do with tax credits and nothing at all with creating work or creating jobs; nothing at all to do with the 725,000 jobs that were promised during the election campaign of 1995 that so many people were hoodwinked into believing would actually happen. So many of them as a matter of fact were so convinced this government was going to create those jobs in the province that they voted for them in spite of what they knew in their heart of hearts was the truth.

Much of it is of no general interest, but there are several provisions where we would like to hear from the public in committee hearings and to propose important amendments, but we won't have that opportunity, alas. Again, this is in keeping with the trend and the style of this government: Ram stuff through, bring it forward, make it big and limit the ability, by way of the rule changes in particular, to take it out to the communities and towns across the province so they might have some input into it; have limited committee hearings here and out across the province; even when you have committee hearings out across the province, make sure nobody knows about them, or that the few who do are told at such a late date that they have a difficult time putting together briefs and arriving on time and making the presentation they want to make.

As a matter of fact, we've heard horror stories in this place about people who had to fight with people around just exactly where meetings were being held, and then at the last minute, having ascertained that a meeting was happening in a particular place, finding out on the morning of the meeting that it had again been changed. They had to chase that down and finally end up in front of the committee to be unceremoniously bounced out and told that their opinion was not appreciated any more and that in Ontario dissenting views are not appreciated any more.

The bill covers 199 pages and seven schedules. That's what we have to debate this afternoon in the short few hours here in this House: 199 pages and seven schedules of legislation that will impact very seriously and severely the lives of every person who lives in a town in Ontario. Your neighbours, my neighbours, my family members will all be affected by this, and we have some two or three hours in this place to debate this. It will be pushed on then through time allocation motion to third reading — I'm sorry, we're in third reading — and soon it will be the order of the day. We've had no significant debate on this, as we have not had on so many other pieces of legislation.

Mr Wildman: It was only introduced two weeks ago.

Mr Martin: Two weeks ago it was introduced, to plug holes in legislation they previously rammed through here without thinking through and without allowing those of us who have some interest in a bill of that nature to come and

make recommendations and point out to you the error of your ways.

To start with, the bill enacts a long list of corporate tax breaks announced in the May 1997 budget, in some cases with minor modifications.

Mr Wildman: Why did it take so long to introduce?

Mr Martin: Good question: Why did it take so long? If this is such an important piece of work, if this is so important for Ontario and it needs to be done in such a hell-bent way these last couple of days of the House before Christmas, why did it take so long to come before the House?

In schedule G it also creates a property assessment corporation to facilitate the download and/or the privatization of the assessment work currently done by OPSEU members in the Ministry of Finance. As I said in my opening few remarks here this afternoon, this is more of the present government's work to try and diminish and downsize and take away the effect and the ability of government to be involved in the lives of the people of the province in a positive, creative and helpful way. In this instance, we're going to privatize the assessment work currently done by OPSEU members in the Ministry of Finance.

Stuck in the middle of schedule F are some amendments to Bill 149. You remember that as colloquially referred to as the son of MVA, which bizarrely was still awaiting final reading in the Legislature when Bill 164 was introduced, a point that was made very eloquently and clearly and effectively by our own House leader in his attempt to have the bill thrown out because it was out of order. We still believe it's out of order, even though we got a ruling otherwise. Only time will tell whether we were right in that instance.

Rather than take time to get it right, the Mike Harris government insisted on ramming Bill 149 through, even though they admitted it had serious flaws. Now they're trying to go back and fix them. They knew they had flaws in the bill before it passed. They passed it anyway, and now they've brought in a bill — actually, they brought in a bill while that bill was on the table to fix —

Mr Wildman: Why didn't they just amend that bill?

Mr Martin: Yes, exactly — the problem they had with the bill in the first place, but that's not their way, as we know around here. This is a group that has an awfully hard time admitting that they made a mistake.

Mr Gerretsen: They don't make mistakes.

Mr Martin: No, they don't.

Furthermore, stuck in the middle of the amendments to Bill 149 is a provision giving the Ministry of Municipal Affairs power to tell municipalities what information they may and may not put on their property tax bills; interesting little piece of work.

Altogether, Bill 164 tells the story of how the Mike Harris government is operating. It combines bully tactics with slap-dash incompetence, all in a headlong dash taking the province in the wrong direction, completely in the wrong direction. This is not an exercise in too much, too fast; this is an exercise in going in the wrong direction.

This bill is most profitably read backwards, so let's start at the end with appendix G, the Ontario Property Assessment Corporation Act, 1997. This is another Who Does What bill, just in case you thought they were all gone, that we were finished with the Who Does What exercise in this place. It follows up on a mega-week announcement to download the \$120-million cost of property tax assessment.

The assessment work is currently done by 1,700 OPSEU members. OPSEU points out, "Aside from saying that the new corporation is not a crown agency, there is no indication what happens to the current workforce." But that's typical, that's something that we've come to expect here too: no consideration, no thought, no impact study as to what happens to the people who lose their jobs as you go about your agenda — where they go, how they fit in, what happens to them, what happens to their families, what happens to the community in which they play such an important part.

Also, while the municipalities are supposed to pick up the tab as of January 1, 1998, they will have no say in running the show for at least a while into the future. Thus, as in other downloaded areas, this raises the question of pay with no say, taxation without representation, a principle of democracy that I don't think any other government has ever had the gall to deal with in the way this government has.

OPSEU points out that David Crombie's Who Does What panel said that transferring assessment should occur when the revised assessment system has stabilized. Moving sooner, according to Crombie, could jeopardize the accuracy and quality of the assessments and undermine the integrity of the process. But again, this government has shown itself to have no interest whatsoever in —

The Acting Speaker: Pursuant to the order of the House dated December 15, 1997, I am now required to put the question.

Mr Baird has moved third reading of Bill 164. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members; this will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1745 to 1750.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): All those in favour please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Grimmett, Bill	O'Toole, John
Baird, John R.	Guzzo, Garry J.	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Barrett, Toby	Hardeman, Ernie	Palladini, Al
Bassett, Isabel	Hamick, Charles	Preston, Peter
Beaubien, Marcel	Hastings, John	Rollins, E.J. Douglas
Boushy, Dave	Hudak, Tim	Ross, Lillian
Brown, Jim	Johns, Helen	Runciman, Robert W.
Carr, Gary	Johnson, Bert	Sampson, Rob
Carroll, Jack	Johnson, David	Saunderson, William
Chudleigh, Ted	Johnson, Ron	Smith, Bruce
Clement, Tony	Jordan, W. Leo	Snobelen, John
Cunningham, Dianne	Kells, Morley	Spina, Joseph
Danford, Harry	Klees, Frank	Sterling, Norman W.
DeFaria, Carl	Leach, Al	Stewart, R. Gary
Doyle, Ed	Leadston, Gary L.	Tascona, Joseph N.
Elliott, Brenda	Martiniuk, Gerry	Tsubouchi, David H.
Eves, Ernie L.	Maves, Bart	Tumbull, David
Fisher, Barbara	McLean, Allan K.	Vankoughnet, Bill
Flaherty, Jim	Munro, Julia	Villeneuve, Noble
Ford, Douglas B.	Murdoch, Bill	Wetlaufer, Wayne
Galt, Doug	Mushinski, Marilyn	Wilson, Jim
Gilchrist, Steve	Newman, Dan	Wood, Bob

Nays

Bradley, James J.	Gerretsen, John	McLeod, Lyn
Brown, Michael A.	Grandmaître, Bernard	Morin, Gilles E.
Caplan, David	Gravelle, Michael	Patten, Richard
Christopherson, David	Hoy, Pat	Phillips, Gerry
Churley, Marilyn	Kormos, Peter	Pouliot, Gilles
Cleary, John C.	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Pupatello, Sandra
Conway, Sean G.	Lessard, Wayne	Ramsay, David
Crozier, Bruce	Martel, Shelley	Silipo, Tony
Cullen, Alex	Martin, Tony	Wildman, Bud
Duncan, Dwight		

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 66; the nays are 28.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

It now being nearly 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 6:30 of the clock, later on today.

The House adjourned at 1754.

Evening sitting reported in volume B.

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No. 262B



N° 262B

ISSN 1180-2987

**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

First Session, 36th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Première session, 36^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Tuesday 16 December 1997

Mardi 16 décembre 1997

Speaker
Honourable Chris Stockwell



Président
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 16 December 1997

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 16 décembre 1997

The House met at 1831.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TIME ALLOCATION

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): I move government notice of motion number 61:

That, pursuant to standing order 46 and notwithstanding any other standing order in relation to Bill 64, An Act to simplify government processes and to improve efficiency in the Ministry of Consumer and Commercial Relations; Bill 65, An Act to simplify government processes and to improve efficiency in the Ministry of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism; Bill 66, An Act to simplify government processes and to improve efficiency in the Ministry of Environment and Energy; Bill 68, An Act to simplify government processes and to improve efficiency in the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines; and Bill 69, An Act to simplify government processes and to improve efficiency in the Ministry of the Solicitor General and the Ministry of Correctional Services, there shall be two hours allotted to consideration of the abovenoted bills together at the third reading stage after which time the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings and shall put all questions necessary to dispose of the order for third reading of the five bills without further debate or amendment;

That the vote on third reading of the bills may, at the request of any chief whip of a recognized party in the House, be deferred until the next sessional day during the routine proceeding, "Deferred Votes"; and

That, in the case of any division, the division bells shall be limited to five minutes.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'm rising to ask you to declare the motion to be out of order. Each of the time allocation motions which close off or choke off debate in this House seems to be more drastic as it comes forward, seems to be more sinister as it relates to the privileges of members of this House and as it relates to healthy, democratic debate for the people of this province.

The last time allocation motion the government had, which you dealt with just a day or two ago, prohibited any consideration of amendments, or any other matters, for that matter, before a committee. They simply wanted it to

go to committee and eject it from committee back into the House.

We have today a time allocation motion which would allow the government to take five bills — previously they wanted six bills; one of those bills passed — that are before this Legislature and with one motion end debate on those bills after two hours. This to the opposition, and I believe to the vast majority of people in this province, is unacceptable. Whether people agree or disagree with the contents of the bill or the effect of the bill is one question. That is a question for debate by members of this assembly duly elected to represent the people of this province. I will not get into the debate on the specifics of those bills — I would be out of order to do so, in my view — and second, that is not what we are debating when we discuss a matter of whether a motion is in order or not.

It seems to me that you as Speaker of the Legislative Assembly have a very significant role to play. Whoever sits in the chair is the person who stands between a government which is bent on disregarding the rules of this House, ignoring the rules of the House or putting aside the rules of the House in order to advance its own agenda and a timetable which would be clearly unacceptable to members of the opposition, perhaps to some government members and as well the people of this province.

It is not sufficient, in my view, for Speakers of this assembly to simply say, if I may use a very simple statement, "The devil made me do it," the devil in this case being some outdated precedents, some advice that one might receive or simply the efficiency of the operation of the government. It seems to me that Speakers have a special role and responsibility other than to deal with the devil, which is in fact the very narrow literal translation of what the rules of this assembly might be.

I must say of this particular Speaker in the House, and I say it not to gain any benefit or to be persuasive of the Speaker, but I must make the comment that this Speaker has been innovative and made some bold and courageous decisions early in his mandate, particularly when there were some difficult matters before the House. I think that was appreciated by all who believe in the democratic process.

The government on this occasion has once again gone too far. Some of my colleagues may get into the intricacies of the details of this legislation. I simply ask you to look at the fact that it is dealing with five bills. They are not in the same policy field. There is not the consent of the opposition. Of course the government will wish to cite precedents, one of those precedents being in 1992 when there

were a number of bills — I believe three or four at the time — under the NDP government put together that dealt with the advocacy legislation related to health care. In that specific case there was the consent of all the parties. In that specific case as well all of them were in the same policy field, within the purview of the same ministry or associated ministries. None of that is in existence this time. If this government is permitted to do it, if it is your decision that the motion is in order, this will be a new precedent which will allow the government then to simply, at the end of the session, bring in as much legislation as it wishes and with one fell swoop pass that legislation with a minimum of debate in this House, with a minimum of consideration.

I know around here at this time of year there are many distractions, so a government may feel the public is not watching. We are in a holiday season. In this Legislature itself one walks down one hallway and there is construction going on, which is very loud and very intrusive. Nevertheless, that is one of the things that is happening. There are a number of other events that are going on in this building this very evening, and I must say throughout the last two weeks of the Legislative Assembly. The House sits at night while members have other obligations which keep them, quite legitimately, in other places. That is why it is particularly suspicious to those of us who sit in the opposition when the government in the very last week begins to bring in these kinds of time allocation motions.

Were there a lot of debate, were there extensive debate on a bill and a government had felt that debate was going on for an excessive period of time and wished to bring in a time allocation motion, a debate would take place or perhaps people would rise on points of order to suggest to you that should not happen, but the government's case is more compelling when there has been extremely extensive debate, particularly when the bill would be of little consequence for the province, the government nevertheless wishing to pass it. It would seem to me if that were the case, the government would have a better case for individually bringing forward time allocation motions.

I remind you, Speaker, this is the 17th time allocation motion of this government which restricts debate. The government has also, I think, or someone will correct me, brought in three or four closure motions which close off debate completely. This is all in the context of new rules initiated and imposed on this Legislature by this government, which were supposed to take away from the opposition the bargaining chips, if I may use that terminology, the opposition might have to slow down the government or to persuade the government it should provide for more hearings or make some minor or perhaps a little more significant concessions to the opposition. Those have been removed by those rules.

1840

Even under the new rules, which are an imposition on this House, which are restrictive of the opposition rights and indeed some rights of non-cabinet members in this Legislature, even with this new rule regime that the government has, it continues to bring in time allocation

motions which, as you have pointed out, set aside the new rules, which are stacked, in my view, in favour of the government, set aside those rules only to say that the government, regardless of what the rules may say, wishes to ignore those rules, to disregard them, to set them aside in order to proceed as the government sees fit. If every time the government does this, the Speaker of the House simply follows some literal interpretation of the rules to say, "The government does have this right to set aside the rules at any time," then this House becomes irrelevant.

I think this is a landmark ruling on your part. I think this is an extremely important ruling on your part this evening because it is going to have an effect, not only on this Parliament, but on future parliaments. All members of this assembly, regardless of the fact whether we sit on the government side or the opposition side, must know that when the rights of the democratically elected members of the Legislature are diminished, then the rights of all citizens who vote us in or vote us out, who happen to cast their ballots at election time, are diminished as well.

There may be others who will make arguments which are of a more technical nature, but I believe we have seen a government, in my view — it's not the only view that exists in the province and I respect all other views that are advocated — which to say the least is hasty in its approach, a government which has moved very quickly, which has moved very drastically and which, in my personal opinion, doesn't always look at the consequences of its actions.

The opposition role is to help to slow the government down, and I think ultimately better legislation for all the people of this province emerges when the government is forced to take a little longer to pass that legislation. If the government is intent upon passing these bills, I suggest to the government House leader — it will be at the behest of the Premier because the Premier ultimately makes these decisions in all governments — and ask that you reconvene the House in January of next year, just a couple of weeks away, and the House will consider further legislation. If the legislation is that important and if the government House leader will make the case that the legislation is that important, then the government should wish to come back at that time to bring forward that legislation for the consideration of members of this House in a normal fashion with, if necessary, some hearings that might be held.

Mr Speaker, I look to you for what I hope will be a ruling which will allow this House to operate in a democratic fashion, which will not allow the government to continue its option of setting aside the rules to impose its own will with motions which are written highly in favour of the government and certainly not of the opposition. You have that opportunity. If I want a ruling which goes right by the book, a technical ruling, I can go to the table and get a technical ruling because that is the role of the table. They are there to interpret the rules. They do it for all governments. They do it impartially. They are servants of all members of this House. I would be surprised and disappointed if they would do anything other than to provide

those kinds of interpretations to a Speaker because it is their role to do that. We all benefit from their good advice and we all respect that advice.

But I suggest to you, Mr Speaker, that you have an opportunity to stand up for all members of this House and to not allow the government to proceed with what I consider to be a new and more drastic, more innovative, if you wish, and more sinister procedural manoeuvre.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): Mr Speaker, I rise to intervene in this point of order. As a member of the minority in this House, recognizing your great responsibility in presiding over this chamber in the debates in the Legislative Assembly and your responsibility to ensure order but also to protect the rights of the minority, I want to make reference to an argument that was ruled upon earlier in this assembly regarding the new standing order 1 and the responsibility of the presiding officer to ensure that the proceedings here are done in accordance with the democratic rights of MPPs. The ruling that was rendered regarding that was that it was understood in the previous standing orders that all proceedings in this House would proceed in accordance with the democratic rights of MPPs. I think that cannot just be words; it must have some meaning.

Unfortunately, all of us who love democracy will understand that simply saying that the proceedings are in accordance with the democratic rights of MPPs does not make it so. It is not just understood, because the rules are such that a majority can in fact abrogate the rights of the minority, and that is simply not acceptable. What determines a democracy is not simply majority rule, but how the majority treats the minority. That is the measure of democracy and it must be the measure of the proceedings in this House.

With regard to this point specifically, this time allocation motion allocates time for consideration of five bills — Bills 64, 65, 66, 68 and 69 — for third reading. Instead of calling each bill for debate, the government House leader wants to group these bills together for third reading consideration and allow for only two hours of debate for all five bills. I want to point out that if we have a debate on five bills in two hours, that works out to 24 minutes per bill, if each gets the same allotment of time, or 12 minutes per party per bill for the two opposition parties or four minutes per party per person. "All aboard. Let's get this train rolling on time." Four minutes. It is outrageous that we would say that it is within the democratic rights of the members of this House to allot four minutes per bill per person.

There are other reasons this is out of order. First, the bills being grouped together in this omnibus time allocation motion are not related to one another in any way. This is an omnibus motion that groups together bills that don't even come from the same policy area.

Hon Noble Villeneuve (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, minister responsible for francophone affairs): Holier than thou.

Mr Wildman: Speaker, I shouldn't listen to what's happening across the way, but he refers to me as holier

than thou, as if caring about the rules in this House is irrelevant to what —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order.

Mr Wildman: I mean this really does confuse you, doesn't it?

The Speaker: Order. Please address your comments to the Chair. Members, heckling on this particular point of order will be fairly inappropriate.

1850

Mr Wildman: The process around here does matter, despite the fact that many members of the government apparently don't understand that. I refer to Beauchesne: "Although there is no specific set of rules or guidelines governing the content of the bill, there should be a theme of relevancy among the contents of the bill." We're dealing with a motion, but it does apply. There is no theme. The government might argue that there is a theme in terms of getting rid of red tape, which is the phrase they use, but the fact is these bills are all dealing with different kinds of tape. They have no relevance to one another at all. They originate from different ministries and they set out to amend completely different acts or regulations. They are completely different policy areas.

Bill 64 deals with the Ministry of Consumer and Commercial Relations. Bill 65 deals with the Ministry of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism. Some would argue that those two might be related. Bill 66 deals with the Ministry of Environment and Energy, Bill 68 deals with the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines and Bill 69 deals with the Ministry of Solicitor General and the Ministry of Correctional Services. Obviously there is no relevance among them at all, completely different policy areas.

Standing order 46(a) allows for the use of time allocation motions. It says, "The government House leader or any minister of the crown may move a motion with notice providing for the allocation of time to any proceeding on a government bill or substantive government motion." Let me emphasize that it states, in the singular, "bill," not "bills" in the plural. The standing order under which this motion is permissible allows for only one bill at a time to be time-allocated. It does not read two or three or, in this case, five bills to be time-allocated.

There have only been two precedents in this Legislature when a time allocation motion has been used for more than one bill. One was in 1992, as referred to by my friend from St Catharines. As he said, at that time the motion had the consent of all three parties in the assembly. Allow me to quote the MPP for Carleton, who is now the government House leader, in his comments in 1992: "I want to make it absolutely clear to this Legislative Assembly that we are in concert with this motion and have voluntarily agreed to it." As a representative of the third party at that time, the now government House leader was stating that he was only agreeing to the motion in a voluntary way and that's why it had the agreement of the parties and could proceed. In fact, the motion was agreed to without a division; it passed on a voice vote because it had the support

of all three parties. This time allocation motion has no such consent.

The only other time we have seen a time allocation for more than one bill was in 1989 when two bills that were companion pieces were passed under time allocation. But I would point out to you, Speaker, that in that particular case the time allocation motion was passed after 60 days of legislative time that they had been on the order paper — legislative time. These bills have been on the order paper for a long time, but I would point out that the government has not called these bills for debate at all. The government had the opportunity to call these matters for debate. As a matter of fact, when the government called Bill 63, one of the bills that they considered related to these other bills, we debated it last week and we passed it. We didn't delay the debate; it passed. It was done in one session, one day.

This government should call each of these bills for debate. If there's any delay that the government is unhappy about or frustrated with on these bills, it is the government's own fault because the government House leader has not called the bills for debate. It is not opposition delay that has caused this. Time allocation motions are used as a drastic method when debate has been stalled, not when the government can't get its act in gear. This government hasn't called these matters for debate. I don't see how they can argue they've been stalled when they haven't called them for debate.

Speaker, you know that it's your responsibility to protect the rights of the minority and to uphold the intent and the purposes of our standing orders. I would ask you to rule this time allocation motion out of order on the basis that it deals with a number of bills together that are not related and that have not been stalled in debate in this House.

Hon Mr Sterling: Mr Speaker, I believe this time allocation motion is in order and has been preceded in this Legislature before. We are talking about five pieces of legislation which were introduced the same day, bills which have a common title, which is part of the requirement of looking at whether bills are related to each other.

These bills all received — and I might add these bills were introduced some year and a half ago in June 1996 — second reading. These five bills received second reading at the time when the principle of the bills is supposed to be discussed at as long length as members in this Legislature might desire, along with three other bills. So there were seven or eight bills — I'm not sure exactly of the number — passed in one legislative session on December 3, 1996.

If one is to draw any conclusions with regard to our attempt to have these bills brought forward, it is that the opposition have used them not to fully debate the merits of the bills but as a delaying tactic. Therefore it is left to us to move this omnibus time allocation motion, which we would rather not do. We have attempted in the past to negotiate the passage of these bills unsuccessfully with the opposition.

I want to talk about the precedents that have been struck in this House and other parliaments with regard to

this and about the commonality of these pieces of legislation. On January 23, 1989, the then Liberal government allocated time on Bill 113, An Act to amend the Retail Business Holidays Act and Bill 114, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act.

At that time, opposition parties argued that time allocation motion was not in order because it proposed to time-allocate two bills. The Speaker, in his ruling, turned to the precedents and practices of this House and other jurisdictions for guidance. He referred to a number of precedents of this House where more than one bill was subject to time allocation motion.

The Speaker ruled that, "Although the standing orders speak of" — and he's quoting the standing orders of the time — "'the allocation of time to any proceedings on a bill,' the rule has not been interpreted to prevent a time allocation order from allocating time in one motion to more than one bill."

The Speaker then referred to the rules of the Australian House of Representatives. The provisions for time allocation in the Australian standing orders are similar to those of the standing orders of our assembly. Their standing order 92 reads:

"A minister may declare that the bill is an urgent bill and on such declaration the question that the bill be considered an urgent bill shall be put forthwith and on such question being agreed to a minister may forthwith move a motion or motions specifying the time which shall be allotted to all or any of the following...." It then lists all the stages of the bill: the initial stages, the second reading, the committee stage and the remaining stages.

Please note, however, Mr Speaker, that it does not anywhere qualify the provisions by stating that the standing order is applicable to numerous bills simultaneously. Indeed, like our standing order 46, it refers to "the bill" or "a bill." None the less, the Australian Parliament recognizes that the standing order is appropriately applied to either a single bill or multiple bills simultaneously as is proposed in the motion before us today.

1900

As the previous Speaker of this chamber ruled, the standing orders, while specifically providing for the allocation of time, speaking of the time allocated to stages of the bill, have not been interpreted as preventing the allocation of time to a group of bills. The manner in which we have included multiple bills in this motion should not only be deemed acceptable, as is fitting with the precedents of this and other parliaments, but also be deemed to be acceptable as they substantively meet the test for omnibus status.

To demonstrate this, we look to the definition of an omnibus bill. Beauchesne states, "Although there is no specific set of rules or guidelines governing the content of a bill, there should be a theme of relevancy amongst the contents of a bill. They must be relevant to and subject to the umbrella which is raised by the terminology of the long title of the bill."

The test applied to the definition of an omnibus bill can also be applied to those elements of an omnibus time

allocation motion such as we have before us today. The bills included in this motion certainly meet the test of sharing a theme of relevancy among the contents of the bill. These bills could easily have been grouped into a single bill. They are all administrative bills whose purpose is to simplify government processes and to reduce red tape.

These are all pieces of legislation which resulted from the government's red tape review and were introduced into the House as a package on the same day, and these bills have continued to move through the legislative process as a group, having all passed second reading on a single day, as I mentioned before, and then been referred to third reading. Their continuation as a group in the form of this motion is most appropriate and is indicative of how they have been dealt with this far in the House.

Bills 61, 63 and 67 have been passed separately from the set under consideration here, as it was the decision of the government that these had a particularly pressing nature to them and their expedient passage was of greater importance at the time. I do not believe that their separate consideration undermines the fact that they too were of substantive relevancy to these bills and of these bills to each other.

Further, I would argue that these pieces of legislation could also meet the omnibus test because their long titles fit under the same umbrella of relevancy. Each of these bills is entitled "An Act to simplify government processes and to improve efficiency in the Ministry of..." and they name the various different ministries that these bills are of concern to. Then they go on to explain different administrative changes within those ministries. It is clear that they are very appropriately grouped together under the same umbrella and thereby are appropriately part of the same omnibus time allocation motion.

Having demonstrated that the contents of this motion satisfy the criteria of being omnibus in character, it is our contention that the motion should be accepted as tabled. Omnibus bills are procedurally accepted. Rulings by Speakers of this House and precedents of traditions all support the practice of using one bill to demand one decision on a number of quite different although related subjects. The same should hold true for this omnibus motion, particularly given the content of the bills in question and the precedents from this House and other jurisdictions.

I would also note that the scope of the legislation dealt with in this motion is far smaller than the larger omnibus bill introduced by the former NDP government. That government introduced Bill 175, An Act to amend the Statutes of Ontario with respect to the provision of services to the public, the administration of government programs and the management of government resources, 1994. Bill 175 amended 139 statutes and covered 14 different ministries.

The member for Dufferin-Peel objected to the bill on the grounds that it lacked a theme of relevance. These were his quotations, "Amendments range from automating the land registry office to allowing alcoholic beverages to

be sold in provincial parks...to allowing individuals to pay for driver's licences, permits and plates by credit card and to banning the use of leg traps in the wild fur industry..."

The then Attorney General, the member for London Centre, in whose name the bill stood, argued, "The act amends a number of statutes to increase the efficiency of the government and to improve the service that the government provides...to the people of Ontario." She also contended, "The matters included in the act have come from diverse sources, including many recommendations of the government's clients and the proposals from experts in the public sector."

That bill was found to be in order and carried. I could cite several other examples, but the precedents are clear: Omnibus bills are in order as long as there is a theme of relevancy among the contents of the bill. The bill's contents are covered by the umbrella of the long title.

The legislation which forms the subject of the motion before us today is far less diverse and far less broad than that found in the Bill 95 brought forward by the NDP government. There should be no doubt as to the appropriateness of these bills being considered as part of this motion and demonstrating the theme of relevancy to each other.

These bills are of a housekeeping nature. They are not controversial but are a routine part of carrying out the business of this province. These bills are the sort which historically have sailed through on a nod, particularly on third reading, which is supposed to consider the process after the committee has considered a bill. That is why these bills were introduced individually and thus as part of a single omnibus bill. This motion will simply serve to facilitate the expedient passage of these bills as is traditionally done by this House.

We have been compelled to allocate time for the passage of these bills because the opposition has chosen to obstruct their passage and the passage of other bills which would normally require little legislative time.

I might also remind you, as I mentioned before, that these bills, along with three other bills, received little second reading debate. In fact, if you count the time allocation motion today and the two hours put forward in the time allocation motion which we will be considering perhaps tomorrow, that time will exceed the second reading debate on these bills.

The reason there was such little debate on December 3 when they received second reading is that their content is not controversial. Indeed it is because the opposition is stalling at this particular juncture —

The Speaker: I need some argument more than I need an interpretation.

Hon Mr Sterling: — that it's necessary for us to put forward this particular motion.

Mr Speaker, I think I've put forward all of the procedural arguments that are necessary to put forward our case. I believe that this time allocation motion is in fact in order.

The Speaker: You can help me. I've got a question: relevancy. Define "red tape" then, to give me a relevancy argument.

Hon Mr Sterling: Mr Speaker, if it's your function to cross-examine —

The Speaker: No, it's not cross-examine. I need some clarification.

Hon Mr Sterling: The Red Tape Commission of this government, headed by the member for Lincoln, who will be speaking on this time allocation motion — I think "red tape" is a common phrase that has been used. It was used by us during our election campaign. It relates to needless bureaucracy. It means processes in government which are not necessary, which can be contracted, can be done away with, so the whole idea of running the government can be made more efficient. That, along with the principal titles of these bills, I believe brings together the commonality of all these bills.

1910

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): I just want to make a couple of very quick points because you've already heard quite a bit about this.

(1) Of the two precedents that have been cited by the government House leader, one deals with the case of unanimous consent, and we all know that by the unanimous consent of this House we can change the rules of this House immediately and we do so every day whenever there is unanimous consent. So to use that as a precedent, in my opinion, is totally irrelevant.

(2) He himself admitted that the Australian case he mentioned dealt with an urgent bill. Surely to goodness, bills that have been sitting on the order paper since second reading, since December of last year, are not of an urgent nature.

(3) If all of these bills are the same, it begs the question, why were two of them called separately, debated and voted on separately?

(4) Standing order 46(a) is quite clear, as has already been pointed out by the member for Algoma. It talks about: "The government House leader or any minister of the crown may move a motion with notice providing for the allocation of time to any proceeding on a government bill..." It doesn't talk about "bills."

I would also refer you to Beauchesne, sections 533 and 534. I'll just read them to you. They are very short.

"Time allocation is a device for planning the use of time during the various stages of consideration of a bill rather than bringing the debate to an immediate conclusion." Again, it talks about it in the singular; it does not talk about it in the plural.

Section 534 states: "A motion for the allocation of time may set out in detail some or all of the provisions which are to be made for the further proceedings on the bill." Again it's in the singular. We're not talking about a whole group of bills here.

If the government House leader is suggesting that he may have made a mistake and should have brought in all these so-called red tape bills in one omnibus bill, that unfortunately, at this point in time, is something he has to

live with. He called them that way or he brought those bills forward that way in June 1995. For him to suggest, and I take great personal offence to him, that the opposition has somehow stalled these bills over the last year or so is absolute nonsense. He calls the bills and no one else.

Mr Wildman: I would just like to raise three points.

First, I think the government House leader's argument is contradictory. He contradicts himself. First he says that the opposition has been obstructive and is stalling the bills. Then he points out that at second reading there was very little debate. How can he claim that the opposition has been stalling and has been obstructive? The fact is, we passed them at second reading with very little debate and, as I pointed out earlier, we passed Bill 63 in one session just last week.

The other point the government House leader makes is on Bill 175, and the member for Kingston and The Islands has made this point. The government House leader knows full well that was with all-party agreement, which is a different situation. We can do anything in this House by agreement. That was the so-called omnibus bill that the NDP government brought in in 1994 and it was done with all-party agreement before its introduction. It dealt with a lot of different bills, that's true, but it was an omnibus piece of legislation; it wasn't a time allocation motion.

I would point out that these bills in themselves are omnibus bills in most cases. Bill 64 amends three different acts. Bill 65 amends legislation relating to the Historical Parks Act, the Ontario Place Corporation Act, the St Clair Parkway Commission Act and the Tourism Act. Bill 66 amends the Consolidated Hearings Act, the Environmental Protection Act, the Ontario Energy Board Act, the Ontario Water Resources Act and the Pesticides Act. Bill 67 amends the Ambulance Act, the Cancer Act, the Charitable Institutions Act, the Healing Arts Radiation Protection Act, the Health Protection and Promotion Act, the Homemakers and Nurses Services Act, Homes for Special Care Act, Homes for the Aged and Rest Homes Act, the Immunization of School Pupils Act, the Long-Term Care Act, 1994, the Mental Health Act, the Ministry of Health Act, the Nursing Homes Act, the Ontario Mental Health Foundation Act, the Private Hospitals Act and the Public Hospitals Act. Bill 67 repeals three acts: the Cancer Remedies Act, the Hypnosis Act and the War Veterans Burial Act, and I could go on.

The fact is we've got now an omnibus motion to pass a bunch of omnibus bills. The Solicitor General and Ministry of Correctional Services Bill 69 amends the Anatomy Act, the Coroners Act, the Ministry of Correctional Services Act, the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act and the Private Investigators and Security Guards Act.

This is an abuse.

Hon Mr Sterling: I would just like to answer some of the points of order. When I was referring to the Speaker in terms of the Australian Parliament, the Speaker used that precedent with regard to the number of bills passed and was not referring to or considering the urgency argument.

The other point I would like to make is in Speaker Warner's ruling on January 23, 1989, when he was talking about whether or not this procedure had been used when unanimous consent was given —

Mr Wildman: It wasn't Warner then.

The Speaker: He made a mistake. He meant Edighoffer.

Hon Mr Sterling: I'm sorry. Speaker Edighoffer referred to a 1986 motion where there was a time allocation motion for two or more bills. On page 425 he's talking about the January 9, 1986, time allocation motion where three related bills were moved together. He said: "Although this motion was passed by unanimous consent on that day, it still represents the will of the House and this does not take anything away from the absolute right of the House to determine its own procedure." So notwithstanding some of the time allocation motions which have been done on unanimous consent, that does not take away from the right of the House to have this kind of motion in order.

The Speaker: Thank you very much. I am going to take a brief recess — I would say 15 minutes — and I will come back.

The House recessed from 1918 to 1944.

The Speaker: I thank all members for their submissions on this matter. The motion before us seeks to allocate time on five government bills. The question before me is whether more than one bill may be the subject of one motion for time allocation. I reviewed the precedents of this House and would like to cite two of them.

On May 28, 1992, which was in fact cited by a number of the people who made submissions, this House considered and passed a motion by the NDP government to allocate time on four bills from three different ministries: Bill 74, the Advocacy Act, standing in the name of the Minister of Citizenship; Bill 108, substitute decisions; Bill 110, standing in the name of the Attorney General; and Bill 109, consent to treatment, standing in the name of the Minister of Health.

Members have argued that this motion cannot be considered a precedent on the grounds that there was general agreement to deal with all these bills together. In the words of the member for Carleton, the opposition of the day was in concert with this motion. This is also true.

However, this did not impact on the orderliness of the motion at the time. Unanimous consent was required only to move it without notice. Had the motion complied with the notice provisions, unanimous consent would not have been required.

Members have also referred to an earlier precedent on this subject, from January 23, 1989. The Liberal government sought to allocate time on two bills: Bill 113, which amended the Retail Business Holidays Act; and Bill 114, which amended the Employment Standards Act. On that occasion, Speaker Edighoffer ruled the motion in order. In the course of that ruling, Speaker Edighoffer made reference to the rules of the House of Commons at Westminster as follows:

"Although the standing orders speak of 'the allocation of time to any proceedings on a bill,' the rule has not been interpreted to prevent a time allocation order from allocating time in one motion to more than one bill." In essence, it isn't out of order to move it in more than one bill.

Finally, in Erskine May, at page 409 it states that "time allocation is applied in each case to a particular bill or several bills jointly."

Having considered the arguments of the honourable members, the precedents and practice of this House and relevant authorities, I am completely persuaded that the motion before us is in fact completely in order.

Government House Leader.

Hon Mr Sterling: I will be sharing my time with the member for Lincoln, the member for Niagara South and the member for Etobicoke-Rexdale.

I also request consent to share the time equally among the three parties.

The Speaker: Agreed? Agreed.

Hon Mr Sterling: As I mentioned to the House before, these five bills are of a housekeeping nature, as we have often talked about in this Parliament. Therefore, I believe they can be dealt with, and it's unfortunate they weren't dealt with, through a degree of cooperation that unfortunately was not here.

I want to now turn our debating time over to the member for Lincoln, Mr Sheehan, who has been the chairman of our red tape task force.

Mr Frank Sheehan (Lincoln): It's a pleasure to rise tonight and speak on the topic of a time allocation on Bills 64, 65, 66, 68 and 69. The Speaker asked the question, "What is a definition of red tape?" Our commission determined that red tape was legislation, it was written regulations, it was licences, permits, approvals, standards, registrations, filings and certification requirements, guidelines, procedures, paperwork, enforcement practices or other measures that are not truly needed to protect the health and safety of Ontarians and maintain environmental quality.

We've known for years, the province has known for years and there's little doubt in my mind — and after I was elected any doubt I had was totally removed — that the people of Ontario have been totally victimized by all those items I've just read out in my definition. These red tape regulations and what have you have impeded Ontario's economic advancement, competitiveness, they have put in place unnecessary blockages to the investment decision and actual running of one's business. In short, the government plan was that we would eliminate this red tape. It was right alongside our commitment to cut taxes and cut the size of government.

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The member for St Catharines the other night seemed to be totally in agreement with what we're talking about and I'll quote him: "I want to tell my friend from Lincoln that I agree with this bill. I welcome its introduction into the House and I am confident it is going to be passed, because it is a bill which lends itself to the simplification of gov-

ernment, the simplification of process without causing any major problems."

Before we were elected we were borrowing over \$1.25 million an hour to pay our debts. We had unemployment at a peak. We had more people on welfare than you can shake a stick at and — I'm lost.

Interjection.

Mr Sheehan: Yeah, right. The battle plan of our first mandate was to identify and eliminate the most obvious and harmful examples of red tape, to design a process that would weed out potential red tape from the new legislation and make recommendations for long-term change. We began by reviewing the legislation and looking for the best way to fight this red tape. We awakened a sleeping giant. The government's red tape burden had been tying us down, and in considering the image passed on to me by one of our external advisers, is probably illustrative of the problem. It's not any one individual piece of red tape or regulation, but he likened it to Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, where Gulliver was tied down by a myriad of tiny red strings, any one of which he could have broken, but in concert they impeded his ability.

Mr Wildman: Jonathan Swift suggested eating all the first-born of the Irish.

Mr Sheehan: Did he? Well, he missed me. The point the government is trying to make on this time allocation bill is that all of these bills deal with process. The bills clearly show, and I will review them with you —

Mr Gerretsen: You don't care about process.

Mr Sheehan: I don't care about process either, John, but the fact of the matter is everybody wants to design a process and nobody is concerned with the consequences of the process. A member of the University of Toronto said: "The best way to protect the environment is to simply tie it up in a myriad of red tape so that it would be impossible to make a move. They forgot to define the subject of the environment. In fact, there are four bills that have the word 'environment' in them; two of them contradict each other and the other two acts don't even define it."

Talking about these various bills and their commonality and why they should be time-allocated, Bill 66 says that we amend the administration of the Ministry of Environment and Energy, and the general purpose of the amendment is to simplify government processes and efficiencies. We look down through the particulars and we have a case where it allows the minister to stipulate one person can represent a class, another one on the Environmental Appeal Board is a member to represent a class, another one deals with the size of the panel. Right now it stipulates that the size of panels is fixed. The next one deals with the establishment of fees for copies of documents. These are very, very critical things that the —

Mr Wildman: Come on, this is a waste of time. I want to vote. Just a waste of time. Let's vote on this. We don't need debate in this place. We don't want debate in here. Let's just vote.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Order. There's a proper way to go about that, if you want, and it's not to shout it out. I won't have it. I want to be able to

hear the person who legitimately has the floor in this House and I demand the same respect for the speaker as you would want for yourselves.

Mr Sheehan: We're dealing with the need to set up a uniform accounting system, the taxation of cost — what have we got here?

Mr Wildman: We don't know.

Mr Sheehan: You don't know. You've read all the bills, haven't you? We require the oral reading of evidence in an appeal board, the relief of a responsibility for filing records and transcripts of an appeal board, the regulations under the Pesticides Act, which allows for the classifications of pesticides under the act, to be done by the Minister of the Environment. We have another one here about the record of oral evidence to the Environmental Appeal Board.

They just keep going on and on. I guess all this particularity is the proper object for the consideration for the members of the opposition because they want to wrap themselves up in all this clutter instead of getting on with some significant debate. There doesn't appear to be any need for us to be concerned with —

Mr Wildman: Let's have a vote. We'll have as much debate on this as we had on 164 in committee.

Mr Sheehan: You're the guys who held this up. We've been trying to get these things on for six months.

Mr Wildman: You never called the God-damned bill. How the hell can we hold it up if they didn't call it?

The Acting Speaker: Order. Please take your seat.

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): We don't decide what bills you call; you do.

Mr Wildman: You guys are the ones who call the bills.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): You're incompetent.

The Acting Speaker: Order. It's five to 8. I would ask that the person who has the floor, who is entering into debate, address his remarks to me and through me, and those other ones who have remarks to make, you would also use the democratic process.

Mr Gerretsen: On a point of order, Speaker: We've been here for the last two days, when on these particular bills the comment has been made by government members that the opposition has held up these bills from being passed in this House. They have not been called for a whole year. I think you should straighten out the government members.

The Acting Speaker: That is not a point of order. If you want me to do those sorts of things, then you would have to empower me through your rules to do that. Up until now you haven't.

Mr Wildman: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The member has indicated that these bills have been stalled or held up. Could you inform the House as to what dates these bills were called so we would know when the previous debate occurred on third reading of these bills?

The Acting Speaker: Indeed, that is not my function. That is not a point of order.

Mr Bisson: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Specifically, can you tell me if it's in order for a member of the House to mislead someone in their comments? Is that in order?

The Acting Speaker: I don't like the tone of the question and I would just as soon, if it was a serious request, that you rephrase it.

Mr Bisson: To be quite calm, to be quite respectful to the Chair, I'm asking the Chair to tell me: According to the standing orders, is it in order for a member of this House to stand up and mislead the House? Is that in order, yes or no?

The Acting Speaker: The rule is that it is out of order to accuse someone of misleading the House.

Mr Bisson: On a further point of order, Mr Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: No, I'm recognizing the member for Scarborough Centre on a point of order.

Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Centre): I think I have a point of order that we can all agree on tonight, that we should all applaud that Paul Quantrill of the Toronto Blue Jays has joined us this evening in the members' gallery.

The Acting Speaker: That is not a point of order. The Chair recognizes the member for Lincoln.

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Mr Sheehan: These bills clearly show that the intent and purpose of these bills is directed at issues which affect the management of government and how the government administers its affairs. It has been pointed out that some of these bills can address several acts, but I would point out in response that it's the nature of ministries to represent more than one set of interests in more than one bill, but their responsibility in administering these acts is what these bills are all about.

One of the first recommendations of the commission's final report was to make red tape progress an ongoing initiative of the government, and we are well on our way to doing that in our second mandate. Our focus for the second term simply picks up where we left off. We will continue to work together to identify, eliminate and prevent barriers to business in this province.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): The member for Lincoln has the floor. There are too many conversations going on. I can't hear, therefore I won't be able to make a ruling, so I would ask, please, for your cooperation.

Mr Sheehan: Specific aspects of the red tape process will dominate our agenda. For instance, we'll continue our efforts to create a working group whose purpose will be to solve the problems of poor customer service and excessive paper burden. We'll also work to resolve some of the issues of the federal-provincial regulatory overlap. By the same token, we'll proceed towards a one-stop shopping environment by reviewing and eliminating duplications between ministries and we'll establish and attempt to create a formal process in which ministries and the government will adopt an ongoing regulatory review process in their business planning processes.

Finally, the Red Tape Commission will continue its proactive public consultation process on red tape issues affecting business, institutions, consumers and the taxpayers.

Mr Tim Hudak (Niagara South): It's a pleasure to speak to the motion in support of the chair of the Red Tape Commission, Mr Frank Sheehan, the member for Lincoln. Certainly, it's been a privilege and a learning experience to work with the chair on red tape bills such as those that we have here before us today. In fact, I remember back in 1995, in the runup to the election, knowing the member for Lincoln by reputation but not knowing him on a personal level, certainly a reputation very strong for being a very outspoken watchdog for the taxpayer, a strong critic of government inefficiencies and waste.

I remember the member for Lincoln gave the school boards in the Niagara Peninsula a tough time, and deservedly so, on many occasions to make sure those dollars that were coming into the school boards were being used wisely.

Some of the member for Lincoln's earlier work in politics dealt with the Taxpayers' Coalition in the Niagara Peninsula, again acting as a watchdog to make sure municipal government or school boards are actually acting on behalf of those who are paying the dollars into those boards. So it was quite consistent and really of no surprise when Frank Sheehan declared his candidacy for the riding of Lincoln in the provincial election, because without a doubt, the philosophy of the Common Sense Revolution to eliminate red tape, cut taxes, cut government waste and increase jobs in that fashion was very much in line with what you saw in the early days with the member for Lincoln's politics and the Taxpayers' Coalition. So it came as no surprise that Frank Sheehan contested that nomination.

I think his reputation spoke very well for him in the Lincoln area, because not only did he win that riding, he won that riding with a very strong majority, I will have to check the statistics again, but I believe the largest majority of any of the six Niagara area seats. So there was a tide that swept through Niagara, a blue tide that brought in four seats and Frank was part of that. But the member for Lincoln's reputation as well helped him to elevate himself even beyond that. With that kind of reputation and that low level of tolerance, I guess, for obfuscation and for red tape and for government waste, it was really no shock to anyone in our caucus that Frank Sheehan, the member for Lincoln, was named as the chair to the Red Tape Commission.

I was very pleased when Mr Sheehan asked me to participate on that commission as well in its early days. I remember some very early meetings and Frank, as the chair, made sure that those meetings completed their work in time as we went on to our other functions in the House.

Mr Gerretsen: What's that got to do with the motion?

Mr Hudak: To demonstrate where these bills came from, the long process involved, and to show the consistency throughout government on where these bills came

from and why it's important to put them through in the time allocation motion before the House today.

Mr Wildman: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would like you to draw the member's attention to the fact that we're debating a time allocation motion.

The Acting Speaker: I think many people make mistakes in debate sometimes and I'm being a bit patient. I'm sure you will come back to the issue. Please continue.

Mr Hudak: The bills in this time allocation motion before the House came through, as I was saying, a long, very dedicated red tape committee process. There were some very strong members with very strong opinions and with the same degree of energy Mr Sheehan displays in these areas, like John Hastings, the member for Etobicoke-Rexdale, who sits next to me in the House and who will also be speaking on this bill, another important part of that red tape reduction commission.

Certainly over the last 10 years, which many people call "the lost 10 years," you saw a real gathering of red tape, as government saw it, to engineer a lot in society, to interfere in the operations of business and government. So it was important to set up the Red Tape Commission to make sure that bills like these in the time allocation motion can come through the House in a timely and due process.

The bills in the time allocation motion are but some of the red tape bills that have already come through this House, and I anticipate many more to come, because the Red Tape Commission is not just a one-time deal. In fact, the Premier has made it a permanent fixture of this government, a fixture as permanent as our commitment to cut taxes, as our commitment to balance the budget by the year 2000-01. Certainly when you heard the Minister of Finance's speech yesterday, he said that we are ahead of schedule in balancing the budget because this government is willing to make the tough decisions. Certainly we've made some tough decisions in the bills before us in this time allocation motion today. Ask yourself, would any other government in the past have had the ability to make the decisions quickly enough to make sure they could get through these bills so we could debate them through the time allocation motion before the House today? I think you saw that commitment with the member for Lincoln and with the rest of us on the Red Tape Commission.

One important component is what the member for Lincoln calls the knothole. Any kind of legislation or regulation would have to fit through this knothole, which is basically a cost-benefit analysis to say: "Can you justify new regulation? Can you justify a law, a piece of legislation, on the basis that it will improve society compared to the costs it will impose on the actors, whether it be business, individuals, government or other actors in our society?"

When these bills came before us today, Bill 64 and such, they had to pass through that knothole. We tried, with Bill 64 in the Ministry of Consumer and Commercial Relations or Bill 65 in the Ministry of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism, to go through that closet of old regulations, old laws, old bills and to see if they actually

fit through that knothole. What came out was a number of changes that should be made to ensure that government operates efficiently, that it interferes in business only at the point where it can be justified for the common good, for the commonweal, as opposed to just interfering for the sake of power.

When you see the red tape bills being passed through this House, and the ones before us today, what that means is that government will be acting in a more sensible manner in terms of how it interacts with business and other actors in our society, whether for-profits, not-for-profits or such, towards the goal of ensuring that jobs are created at a rapid pace, which we're seeing in the last few months in Ontario, to ensure the budget will be balanced by the year 2000-01.

Again, in the context of the finance minister's speech yesterday, you're seeing that kind of progress here in Ontario, and these red tape bills before us are helping us get there, for the deficit has been reduced quite effectively and we're ahead of schedule on that. Bills like those in the time allocation motion we're debating today also have supported us in eliminating 1,000 regulations in Ontario to ensure that more jobs are being created. You can see jobs being created, because Ontario has the fastest rate of growth in the economy, not only of the 10 provinces in Canada but highest among OECD nations, a rapid growth in Ontario as people realize the changes we're bringing to this province to reward business, to eliminate red tape as we're doing through these bills and the time allocation motion, to balance the budget and to ensure that for the children of the members here, the children in the audience who may be watching, their future will be much stronger, their opportunities greater and vaster than those that were facing them five or 10 years ago.

It is an important motion that I favour because I want to see these bills get through, to build on the successes we've had so far with job creation, balancing the budget and eliminating the red tape that we have seen build up in 10 years. There are 1,000 regulations gone and I'd like to see 1,000 more gone.

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Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke-Rexdale): To continue the discussion of these particular bills, I think it's important to focus on some of the detail that's in them. We're dealing with time allocation and we're dealing with the content of the bills and we'll deal with the items as we see fit, the way you folks always deal with them over there.

Mr Bradley: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: While I appreciate the latitude the member will have, and I always like to see that, we are not dealing with the bills. In fact, we've been allocated only two hours to deal with the bills.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Etobicoke-Rexdale.

Mr Hastings: It's interesting to note that the member for St Catharines is a stickler for detail suddenly, sticking to the actual discussion of the item under analysis, but when it comes to his treatment of other items under discussion in other hours of other days of this session, we have seen him use any kind of latitude —

Mr Gerretsen: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: As you well know, it's a well-established practice in this House not to impute motives to any members. This is what the member is doing right now with respect to the member for St Catharines.

The Acting Speaker: Please take your seat. The member for Etobicoke-Rexdale.

Mr Hastings: Thanks very much, Speaker. I am sure we will have another interruption in a moment. It's simply a matter that the members opposite really do not treat the content of these bills or see the overall symbolism or significance of these bills in terms of the reduction of red tape.

Mr Wildman: I have a point of order on two matters, Mr Speaker: First, the member is imputing motives on the part of the opposition members, on which you have not called him to order; second, I suppose it's fine for him to debate the content of the bills, even though we won't actually be doing that in order until we get to third reading and we're not at third reading. But it's probably all right because this government has made it clear that all debate in this House is irrelevant so it doesn't really matter what he says. Let him say whatever the hell he likes.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order. I honestly think that we can debate in a friendly way to the point without creating an atmosphere which isn't too conducive to good debate. I would ask you to be tolerant, as we all are of each other, and pay attention to what the member for Etobicoke-Rexdale has to say.

Mr Hastings: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. It's unfortunate the member for Algoma has to look at the context of these debates in terms of just stating what he has said —

The Acting Speaker: No, go back to the motion.

Mr Hastings: — that any particular matters before this House are irrelevant. If that's true —

Mr Wildman: You think they're irrelevant.

Mr Hastings: No, I do not. If anybody's imputing motives around here, I would suggest that members opposite have done a pretty good job at that over the years. However, to concentrate on the particular —

Mr Wildman: I wasn't imputing any motives. I was just stating facts.

Mr Hastings: Oh yes, we know.

The Acting Speaker: Order. I will just wait a few minutes while temperaments cool down a bit.

The member for Etobicoke-Rexdale.

Mr Hastings: If we look at some of the proposals contained, for example, in Bill 69, An Act to simplify government processes and to improve efficiency in the Ministry of the Solicitor General and the Ministry of Correctional Services, it would be interesting to hear from members opposite, if they are concerned about providing solid alternatives, what their alternative would be in dealing with the specific matter of when inmates are transferred from one penal institution to another at the provincial level.

Prior to the introduction of this bill and the Red Tape Commission dealing with Bill 69 —

The Acting Speaker: Your time is up. Thank you.

It's very difficult for the Chair to be able to control the debate when there are all kinds of conversations going on. There are serious matters to be debated and I would ask your cooperation, please. If not, I have the power of decision. I don't want to use it.

The member for St Catharines.

Mr Bradley: Thank you, Mr Chairman, for the opportunity to participate, though I regret very much that we're participating once again in a time allocation motion debate. In fact, one area where I would agree with the member for Etobicoke-Rexdale — and he may find it odd that I would agree with him — one place I would agree with him and indeed with the member for Lincoln is the fact that I wish we were taking the time to debate the bills rather than time allocation motions.

If you look at particularly the latter part of this session, this House has spent more time dealing with time allocation motions, that is, motions which close off or restrict debate, than we have anything else. I'd be much more interested in hearing what members have to say to defend and to oppose the legislation that might be before us, because the members may make some very valid points in this regard.

As I mentioned to my friend from Lincoln, some of the content of some of these bills is acceptable and reasonable, and I don't think you would have seen the opposition take an unduly long period of time to debate them. What we want to do, however, by having a fairly comprehensive debate on these bills is to highlight the areas where we feel there might be a danger.

I know it is in vogue, particularly with this government, to talk about eliminating red tape, but I don't think it's good enough simply within a set of bills to talk about eliminating red tape and not look specifically at what is happening. It's a glib phrase, but of course it can mean the loss of thousands of jobs in some cases. It can mean that restrictions which were there for proper reasons are gone.

For instance, the Ministry of Consumer and Commercial Relations and the Ministry of Environment and perhaps the Ministry of Health are three that come to mind immediately as ministries that do require regulation. Remember, regulations were formulated and passed by governments usually in response to problems which arose. They usually were not put there in the first place but rather they responded to difficulties which were being experienced.

Members of this Legislature may have been called, for instance, by people who were trying to sell to them or to their offices some products. I noticed recently there is a company that is calling around and using the name of the constituency office assistant, and they can get that out of a book. They've probably done a market survey before about what equipment you might have in the office. Then they'll phone up and say, for instance, "We have a product to sell you for your Xerox equipment." Staff who are busy dealing with a multitude of items may not recognize

immediately that the Xerox company contract may call for a provision of materials, so they've ordered it over on top because someone has said, "We're going to put up the prices next Tuesday and, if you want a chance to purchase, you'd better purchase now." I agree that the Ministry of Consumer and Consumer Relations — and the minister answered a question today, by the way — has a role to play in cautioning and in bringing to the attention of consumers potential scams that may be perpetrated upon various kinds of people.

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I say to the members that as you remove some of these regulations, you remove the protection that is there for some of the people of this province. I would suggest that most people, at least the consumers in this province, and, I may add, good business people with good business practices, often support certain regulations which others who wish to break the law or wish to con customers might feel get in their way. So I want to compliment the thousands upon thousands of good business people in this province who have over the years asked for this kind of regulation to allow for what I would call a level playing field.

Let me give you an example. There are a number of people in the industrial field who may have felt that the municipal-industrial strategy for abatement program, which was implemented when I had the privilege of being the environment minister and then further implemented by subsequent governments, was an imposition. But what happened was, when government started to back off on those regulations, those good corporate citizens who had spent the money on training their employees, who had purchased new equipment, who had modified their systems to comply with what were reasonable regulations, were angered when they saw governments back off and allow others who weren't prepared to be good corporate citizens and not put that kind of investment in their business in people, in equipment and in systems, in all three areas.

Your good corporate citizen, your good businessperson and your consumers often want to have these regulations in place, so what I caution members of the House about is just accepting this glib saying. This government is very good at putting out a glib, easy-to-understand saying that at first look seems to be reasonable. When you go beyond the first look sometimes it's not and sometimes it is; I don't want to say it isn't always the case.

The problem with implementing this by means of a time allocation motion is that we have now another precedent before this House for governments to come in, in the last of the session, and simply sweep bills through this House without debate on third reading. I happen to disagree with the Speaker's decision this evening, though I always respect the decisions of the Speakers of this House, which are taken only after considerable observation, considerable study.

This evening the Speaker took a very significant period of time to assess the arguments that were put forward by members of the House from all sides. I happen to think that the decision that was rendered is one which most members of this House will live to regret, because it is

going to allow governments now, as in this case, to sweep five bills together — they wanted six bills previously — and to simply end the session in that way.

Why this is particularly dangerous is that now under the new rules imposed by the Mike Harris government, rules which radically change procedures in this Legislature, governments can introduce and pass legislation in the last two normal weeks of the session. The member for Algoma, the government House leader of the New Democratic Party, has aptly named this the Ernie Eves provision, because when Mr Eves, the member for Parry Sound, was the House leader of the third party, he insisted when the last government changed the rules of the House that there be a provision which would prohibit governments from introducing and processing new pieces of legislation in the last two weeks.

Mr Wildman: Then he introduced Bill 164 himself.

Mr Bradley: Exactly. The minister himself has, the member for Algoma points out, introduced a bill in the last two weeks. So what's going to happen now for all governments, and I just warn the members of the opposition, not in a nasty way but in a very matter-of-fact way, that all governments who get this opportunity are going to do it. I mean, what you're doing is setting this up for a government with which you disagree.

There are a lot of people on the government side who would characterize themselves as pro-business. That is something that they're proud of, and justifiably so. The problem is, what if you get a government which you would characterize as anti-business and they bring in bills which would bring in brand-new regulations; in other words, re-regulate in many areas that you felt were inappropriate? That government can now, under the precedent set by the decision of the Speaker this evening, bring in five bills or more and have them all passed at the end of the session without people out there knowing what they're about, without looking at the consequences of these bills.

I know it's convenient, as I've mentioned before, to the people who have great power in all governments, this government included, and that is the people in the back rooms, the unelected people who advise government. Sometimes they are public servants or civil servants and other times they are political advisers. It's convenient for them because it fits their agenda. But I say, for elected members of this House, the problem is that when that agenda doesn't suit you and those bills are being shoved through the House with one motion, it is exceedingly dangerous.

I think we've seen a significant step backwards this evening. I mentioned that I thought the Speaker was making a landmark decision this evening, and indeed the Speaker did make a landmark decision. I think as a result of this motion being declared in order, we've taken a significant step backwards in terms of parliamentary democracy in this province. But it is only part of a long series of steps backwards this government has taken.

Our arguments may be for or against the individual bills being brought forward by the government, by various ministries, and there are probably some good arguments in

favour and some good arguments against on each one of those, but those arguments will be confined to two hours for five different bills because of this motion this evening.

I believe what you're seeing is the continued diminishing of the role of this House and, as I've said on a number of occasions, the problem is that we are the only elected people. We are the only ones that the people can get at. If they are unsatisfied with what we are doing, the electorate may, in the next election, change any one of us. Our job is always on the line in every election. But the unelected advisers are not subject to that and they can't get at those people, so they feel frustrated. I know even some members of governments over the years who have not been members of the inner cabinet have expressed the concern that they feel unelected people have much more influence with the government than they have, and this particular motion plays exactly into that.

We're not discussing the merits of the bills. Although I have looked through them and I have some concerns about certain of the bills, on other bills I've looked through certain provisions and I don't have any concern at all. In fact I think in some cases there could be an improvement. The member for Lincoln quoted me on one. Of course, people in this House tend to quote when they feel it's appropriate to make their argument, and that's acceptable, I understand that. But he's quite accurate in saying that in some of the bills coming forward in this series of bills, you're not going to get considerable opposition, if any opposition, from members of this House who sit on the opposition side.

It's a most regrettable evening. It's most unfortunate that we are proceeding in this way. I think we've made a major error as a House in having this presented and having it accepted as an order, and I will certainly allow some of my colleagues to make further comments as to the appropriateness of this particular motion of the government House leader.

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): I must salute my colleague from St Catharines who in his rational, non-emotional way put forward the argument and I think the concern of many members here, and certainly a major concern of mine.

The first thing I would like to say is that I'd like the members of the government to explain where and how the bills were stalled in any particular way, because I do not believe that to be the case. They were on the order paper and they were not called by the government, and that is the basic fact.

I think what we're seeing here is just the tip of the iceberg. My colleague from St Catharines says this is a historic evening in that it has now been recognized that a new precedent has been set where a variety of bills in one full sweep can be moved quickly, in a matter of two hours. My colleague from Algoma pointed out that that would really mean, with time allocation, an opportunity for three members from each party to speak for four minutes to each bill.

Is that the function of this particular House? Is that what democracy has come to mean in this particular day and age under this government? I must say, sadly, that

unfortunately it has. Ever since the opening, since Bill 26, we have seen the demise of this Legislature, especially with the rule changes.

We are now in an interesting position in Ontario. Ontario is now the only provincial Parliament that allows a government to take a step towards passing a law without a corresponding question period that makes it accountable for taking that step. That's not the only area. I'm doing some research on this at the moment because I'm so concerned about it that I have to consider my future as to whether I want to be a member of this Legislature in future, especially if it would happen to be in opposition, because your rights are limited. Regardless of the ruling of the Speaker, which I respect, I will give you an example of where the members' privileges are breached in being able to make representation duly in the tradition of our parliamentary system.

2030

Time allocation, Bill 136: This was the bill that was going to deal with the unions, the labour relations bill that would help facilitate a minimum amount of discord. It created a tremendous amount of discord and finally the government backed off. A time-allocated bill in the House: How much time for debate? Time was allocated for a certain number of hearings. Time was allocated for discussion about amendments. The Liberal Party put forward 57 amendments. We were able to talk to only five or six of those amendments; time ran out and that was the end of it. The government voted. They accepted no NDP amendments. They accepted no Liberal amendments. They endorsed all of their own, of course.

Even prior to the amendments being asked for — we had finished the hearings on a Friday afternoon, which wasn't a scheduled day of meeting but the committee met to listen to, in total, about 87 people make presentations. We were told at 5 o'clock that we had to have our amendments in at 10 o'clock on the Monday morning. Now you tell me whether that is a kind-hearted, generous or even fair government. That was time-allocated.

So you time-allocate the debate, you time-allocate the hearings, you time-allocate the amendment period of time and you even allocate the time in which you get your amendments in. I suggest to you it's a mean-spirited thing.

Over the weekend we worked until midnight almost each night to try and get those together, to do the research, to get the legislative counsel together because it had to put into legalese in preparation for Monday morning. Do you think that is fair? It's not fair, it's not just and it's not the tradition of this particular Legislature.

I get very, very upset, and so do my colleagues. When the Speaker asks for a feeling of harmony, I must tell you, it is very difficult to have a sense of calmness when you feel you've been insulted and the members, regardless of whether they're on the government side or not, have lost their privileges to perform their duties and functions, because I tell you, right now we cannot do that. Therefore that's why this Legislature now is the sickest and the most undemocratic Legislature in all of Canada. I'm documenting this. I'm doing a comparison of the other legislatures.

We should be ashamed of ourselves. This place belongs to the people of Ontario. All of the members, whether they are NDP or Liberal or Conservative, it doesn't matter, each person is representing a group of people.

This time allocation that we're talking about tonight is another way of saying: "We're closing you down. We're limiting your capacity." Sometimes it may be justified, when you have extended days and days of debate. But I must remind you that in our parliamentary system the loyal opposition is there for one purpose and it's to prevent tyranny. That's right in the mission of the standing orders, to prevent tyranny, in order to cause the government to reconsider or take more time to reflect upon the proposals they are putting before the House.

Essentially the overall, only function of the opposition is to address the government to say: "Just one moment. We have some questions about your legislation. We're hearing from the public too and here is what they are saying." We need time for the media to take an interest in what's happening. Sometimes they don't catch on to an issue for three or four days. Now, of course, in three or four days something could be right through and at committee, and before you know it, something happens and people are saying, "How did that pass?"

Here's an interesting thing that I will tell you that I find most discouraging. Here's what this government is creating: You've reduced the opportunity for the opposition to play its historical role, and that is to raise issues and to question the government in certain directions. Everybody agrees that a majority government has the overall power and responsibility, and I concede that it must proceed with its business. That's not the issue. But when you limit the opposition to a certain number of hours, what happens? The teachers went out and did the job of the opposition. The unions are going out and doing the job of the opposition because we can't play that role. We couldn't raise the same questions. We didn't have the time. We were limited on the amount of time that we had to raise the questions in relation to the bill. The teachers did that.

You're going to find that municipal workers, nurses and teachers — all of the constituents — now will say: "We don't have any voice if the government decides to do something because the opposition is now moribund to a great degree. Therefore we will have to do what we have to do." You've caused a revolution all right. You've caused a revolution where people are going to take to the streets on their own because now they feel that this particular Legislature is ill, is sick and the most undemocratic Legislature — and I'm sad to say this — in all of Canada. I'm embarrassed to say that and ashamed to say that, but it is true and this is just the tip of the iceberg.

Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Prescott and Russell): First of all, I don't know why we are debating time allocation when we should be dealing with other bills. There are many other bills that we should be debating, especially Bill 170, the Milk Amendment Act. The dairy farmers are waiting for it. They were told that third reading would be before Christmastime. They have the list of all their

inspectors. I just got a call tonight that some of the inspectors are going away. They're looking for another job because the government is not moving. The last word I got is that the government is saying to the farmers it is the opposition stopping everything. We are not. We are ready to debate it tonight. We are ready to debate it next week.

Bill 146, the right-to-farm act, has been discussed, discussed, discussed. The farmers have been waiting for this bill and again we won't hear anything until the next session.

The downloading itself is a matter that should be in front of this House and should be given plenty of time to discuss.

I'm looking at the community reinvestment fund. When I look at it, the figures this government came out with are unbelievable. I just don't trust those figures and they're not true figures. I'm telling you, they say Prescott and Russell will collect \$442,000 in fines, but who's going to pay the police? All the municipalities. But they will not be allowed to collect any fines. This is right in black and white right here.

I'm looking at the county of Prescott and Russell. They'll have a shortfall of \$8.679 million in the year 2000.

I don't think we should be debating time allocation. We should be debating those very important issues at the present time. The government is trying to hide again. They're trying to pass this bill which to me is another omnibus bill trying to take control. I call them control-grabbers; I call them money-grabbers. That's what it is.

We are trying to make this a gambling province in everything we look at. Casinos are the most important part. We're trying to take away money from the poor people.

When we look at home care services, they're down the drain again. The people in Ottawa-Carleton are saying: "What are we going to do around Christmastime, around New Year's time? All the offices are going to be closed."

Those are the points we should be discussing tonight, not time allocation on these bills that we are talking about.

2040
Mr Gerretsen: It has already been said earlier tonight that this is truly a historic night. It's a night of infamy because this is the night when the government decided to take five bills that it could have called on an individual basis for third reading since December 6 of last year at any time they wanted to. Since that time, we have had close to 200 sessions in this House. At any time your House leader could have called these bills one at a time — they all deal with different ministries — and they would have been debated and passed.

I respect the Speaker, and I respect the Speaker's ruling, but it doesn't mean that I have to agree with that ruling. What the Speaker in effect has said is that it's all right for a government to bring in a time allocation motion and put as many bills together as they want. I can well see a time in the future when a government decides in the last two or three days of a session that it will just bundle together all the bills that it hasn't been able to pass during

that period of time, just clear the entire order paper, bundle it all together and say, "All right, we're going to deal with them all at once." That just isn't right. It demeans this House, it demeans what we're doing here and it doesn't speak well of the democratic process.

I know government members think that this is a bit of a joke, that these bills are somewhat less controversial than most. I will agree with that; they are not as controversial as some of the other legislation that we have seen. As a matter of fact, of the 20 different bills that have been time-allocated here, this is the first time in the 20 time allocations that we have seen over the past year where actually we have taken non-controversial legislation and put it all together and time-allocated it.

You've got to look at it on the basis of precedent. I am quite sure that when those House leaders who made that deal back in 1992 agreed on a consent basis to put two bills together in a time allocation motion, they never thought that the fact they consented to do it at that time could be used as a precedent in a case where each party wanted to debate a particular bill. It has been used now in a situation which is totally different from a consent kind of situation. We have seen many times in this House where on the unanimous consent the rules are temporarily changed, in order to pay tribute to an individual or in order to talk about a matter that all the parties feel should be addressed on that particular day, but it has always been done on unanimous consent. We now have a situation where unanimous consent to time allocation at one time is being used as the reason for allowing time allocation on a number of different bills at the same time.

I'm sure there are many people out there who are saying: "What's the relevance of all this? It really doesn't matter at all, surely." I say to you, Mr Speaker, that it does matter. When you think about it, until fairly recently, I think up until about 10 or 12 years ago, it was almost impossible to put closure on any item in the House. I can remember Mr Kormos one day talking about an insurance bill for — what was it, 48 hours straight?

Mr Bradley: It was 17 hours.

Mr Gerretsen: For 17 hours straight, and the reason he did that was there was no such thing as closure in this House, and I believe that was less than 10 years ago. Unfortunately, what has happened is that over the last 10 years, these kinds of situations where either closure is invoked or time allocation is invoked have become almost the norm and almost the standard.

I hope the people of Ontario will start taking notice of this. They didn't take any notice last summer when the rules were dramatically changed. Why are we even here this week? Under the old rules, we wouldn't have been here this week, because it would have been up to the Speaker to decide whether we were to meet in a week that was not scheduled on the House calendar. That's all changed too. The government can just call us back whenever they want. They don't need the Speaker any more; they just go ahead and do it. I suppose they could call us all back on January 3 or 4 if they wanted to. We would

have said that's fine in this particular case; we want these bills debated.

Time allocation is basically undemocratic. I think that in the long run a society is judged by the way it treats a minority, whether that minority be the vulnerable in society or whether it be the democratically elected minority. This government has shown disdain for that. They are bullies. Once again their bullying tactics have succeeded in this case, but I'm sure that one day the people of Ontario will stand up and take notice and say, "What have we lost in this period of time?"

Mr Bisson: It's with a certain amount of regret that I rise tonight to speak on yet another time allocation motion on the part of the government. We need to be clear and make sure we try one more time to get the government members to understand what it is they're doing here, because I really don't believe a lot of the government members understand what their House leader is doing.

You need to be quite clear about this. The whole idea of the House is, yes, the government has to have the ability to pass this bill; nobody in the opposition parties argues that. In extraordinary times — and that happened in this House on a couple of occasions; once under Bill 26 and another time under the megacity bill — the opposition put the feet of the government to the fire because it was felt not only by the opposition members but by the general public that the government was going too far in its approach when it came to those two particular pieces of legislation.

When the standing orders were created, when this whole idea of democracy was created, it was decided that in the British parliamentary system we would allow the government the power to pass its bills by way of majority, but we would give some power to the opposition to hold the government accountable, but at the same time in extraordinary circumstances to slow the government down so it could reflect on what it was doing. That's what the whole principle of British parliamentary democracy is supposed to be all about. The government members don't understand that this particular time allocation motion is not needed and flies in the face of what this parliamentary system is supposed to be all about.

Mr Speaker, there's a conversation going on here fairly loudly. I wonder if you can bring it under control.

The Acting Speaker: I am sure you will understand that, because you did the same thing a minute ago. I would ask you to continue the debate. I would ask the other members to please try to keep your conversation a little bit lower.

M. Bisson : En français on dit «Touché.»

As I was saying, I want the government members to understand this is not a case of the opposition saying, "Oh, my God, the rights of the minority have yet again been contravened by this government." There is a legitimate argument on the part of the opposition. We understand that the government has the power and the ability to pass bills. But what the government has to understand is that the minority in the House, in this case the two opposition parties, also have to have the ability at times to hold the

government accountable. That's the principle by which democracy is supposed to work.

What the government is doing in the case of five red tape bills, Bills 64 through 69, where there hasn't been any opposition on the part of the two opposition parties — neither the Liberal opposition nor the New Democratic opposition has held these bills up in the House. In fact, these bills, which were introduced a year and a half ago, have had ample opportunity, if the government had called them forward, to be passed. But this government, because it had major initiatives like megacity, like Bill 160, like downloading and a whole bunch of other huge bills and huge initiatives provincially, chose — and the operative word is “chose” — not to call those bills forward to final reading at third reading. They have done so at second reading, but they took a year and a half to get to the point we're at now. The government is saying, “We need a time allocation motion to pass these because the opposition members are stalling the bills.”

When these bills came to the House at second reading, that was not the case. There wasn't huge opposition by the opposition. In fact, they passed through second reading fairly quickly. You would remember, Mr Speaker — you were here as Speaker of the House and as a member on occasions when those bills came forward — there was not substantive debate to the red tape Bills 64 through 69. In fact, I believe when Bill 63 came to this House for third reading last week or the week before, it was passed on the same day. There was an agreement among the three parties that that bill had to go through.

2050

As we have said to the government, we don't have substantial opposition to a number of these bills, Bill 60 through Bill 69. This is the part that really confounds the opposition. There hasn't been substantive opposition to these bills; there hasn't been an attempt on the part of the opposition to hold up these bills in lengthy debate. The reality is that the government House leader did not call them forward. Then he comes to the House in December, at the end of the session, and says: “Oh, I haven't called them forward and I haven't done my job too well because this government has been too busy passing other substantive bills through the House. I want to get these through and I've only got three days. So what am I to do? I'll blame the opposition and bring in a time allocation motion.” The reality is that it's your own fault.

Why do you come into this House with a time allocation motion? The important point is that you're doing it because you yourselves were not able to manage the House. That's what the problem was. It wasn't the opposition.

The other point —

Mr Wildman: He wants to prevent the government backbenchers from debating at length.

Mr Bisson: That's a point. My House leader is saying —

The Acting Speaker: The member for Algoma, let your colleague express himself.

Mr Wildman: I was helping him out.

Mr Bisson: He was helping me out and I appreciated it. It was quite good, and he makes a good point. By way of this, he's not even allowing the government members to debate these bills.

The point I make is simply this: The government are the ones who did not call these bills forward, and because they didn't call them forward, they find themselves in the position they're in now. There was no substantive debate on these bills, or opposition on the part of the two opposition parties, so the government brings forward a time allocation motion which in effect is an omnibus time allocation motion. They're saying, “We want to pass a time allocation motion that will pass five omnibus bills that we've already brought into the House: Bills 64, 65, 66, 68 and 69.”

We're saying to the government: Be careful. The precedent you're setting here you may one day have to live with. How would the government members feel if the NDP government, when elected in the next term of government, came into this House and said, “We are going to pass five bills that amend a whole bunch of different acts that you have philosophical problems with”? What would they do? I really want to know. What would happen if the NDP government were to come in and say, “We're going to pass Bills 1 through 5 that amend 40 pieces of legislation individually”? What would the government members say, those who were lucky enough to survive to another term to get into opposition? They'd go ballistic. You're setting a precedent here and you have no idea what you're setting up.

The government members across the way say, “I remember 1989 and I remember 1992.” You weren't even here. In 1989 there was a substantive debate in the House on the issue of Sunday shopping. At the time, there had been substantive debate under the Peterson government on this bill, and to achieve the result the government wanted, they had to amend two acts to get the thing done. One was the Retail Business Holidays Act and the other one was the Employment Standards Act. Only after substantive debate did the government House leader of the day come into the House and introduce a time allocation motion to bring those two bills through the House.

In the case of 1992, there was an all-party agreement. The House leaders sat down, the way it's supposed to be done around here. The House leader of the NDP government of the day sat down with the Liberal House leader and the Conservative House leader — they were the third party — and there was an all-party agreement on bringing these bills back into the House and then, to boot, unanimous consent was given by the House to deal with the time allocation motion, because you couldn't do that without notice at the time. There was an all-party agreement at the House leaders' meeting and that was followed by unanimous consent in the House. You come into the House and say, “Oh, we have precedents to be able to do this because of what happened in 1989 and 1992.” They're not even related to what has happened in the past.

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton North): The Speaker ruled.

Mr Bisson: You weren't even here.

Mr Spina: I was watching on television.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Brampton North.

Mr Bisson: Oh, I'm sure you were watching on television. Oh, yeah. If you were watching on television, I can tell you you'd be somewhat upset watching what the government does.

Mr Spina: The Speaker ruled.

The Acting Speaker: Order, the member for Brampton North.

Mr Bisson: For the government members to make the argument that they can do this because somehow or other there's some precedent in the past — I understand and respect the decision of the Speaker. I understand and accept the ruling of the Speaker. The point I make to the government backbenchers is that on the previous occasions, on one there was unanimous consent in the House in order to allow it to happen, and on the second they were two related bills that had been debated at length.

What the difference here is and what you don't seem to understand is these are five bills that are omnibus bills in themselves that amend over 40 pieces of legislation and there has not been an attempt on the part of the opposition to hold the bills up. In fact, we have gone to the government House leader and asked him when he's going to deal with some of these bills, like the Milk Amendment Act and others. It's not our fault in the opposition if the government hasn't called them forward.

Why is it they haven't called them forward? In fairness to the government House leader of the day and the one today, Mr Sterling, they had marching orders from Mike Harris to pass very controversial pieces of legislation. They had a very busy House agenda and they had more on their agenda than they could deal with in the legislative days given. But whose fault is that? That's not the fault of the opposition. The government had way too much on its agenda. At the same time, it was trying to do far too much, I would argue, in the wrong direction, and now finds itself in the position, three days to the end of this session before we prorogue the House into the next session, of having these bills about which they said, "Oops, we haven't been able to pass them."

I don't accept the arguments of the government. These were not held up by the opposition, so why should they use this particular time allocation motion? They're setting a precedent here that I think they will rue if ever they're in opposition. They will go ballistic. If the Tories are lucky enough to be back in this House with two MPPs after the next election, those two MPPs, who will not even form a caucus in the next Parliament, will go absolutely ballistic if any government tries to try to do what they're doing. I say to you, be very careful of what you're setting out in the way of precedents.

Just to give you an idea of how huge an implication this is, the government is going to do these five bills by way of time allocation, with third reading tomorrow night. Get a load of this, Mr Speaker. You understand this. You've been in this House long enough to understand it. It means each of those five bills will get 12 minutes of debate for

each party. These bills are quite substantive in some cases.

Mr Wildman: Each opposition party.

Mr Bisson: Each opposition party has 12 minutes; it's even less than that if you count the government in. But for each opposition party there will be 12 minutes per bill to debate at third reading and some of these bills are quite substantive. Tomorrow night we'll get into the debate and we'll get into the detail of what those particular bills are.

Je veux seulement dire, pendant les dernières minutes que j'ai, que le gouvernement cause un précédent ce soir qui est très dangereux à cause de ce qui se passe à l'Assemblée. Ils vont se donner avec cette motion l'habileté de passer cinq législations en même temps par une motion de fermeture.

Le précédent qu'ils commencent ce soir, c'est un précédent qui est très dangereux dans une démocratie. Comme je le dis, si jamais il y a des Conservateurs qui sont assez chanceux de gagner un siège lors de la prochaine élection, je vous dis qu'ils ne seront pas trop contents lorsqu'ils vont regarder le précédent qu'ils ont créé. Le précédent, Monsieur le Président, comme vous le savez, c'est de vraiment causer un affront à la démocratie ontarienne qu'on a connue dans cette province.

En terminant, le gouvernement a démontré au cours des dernières deux années et demie que oui, il a un agenda, que oui, il est préparé à le mettre en place, mais il est préparé à le faire d'une manière qui est assez non-démocratique et qui n'est quasiment pas acceptable par la majorité seulement des membres de l'opposition mais de la plupart de la population.

Je peux vous dire que dans mon comté, il y a une «gang» de Conservateurs qui ont de grands problèmes avec ce gouvernement quand ils regardent la manière dont ils agissent. Dernièrement, quand ça en vient à l'agenda de ce gouvernement, il y a beaucoup de monde qui disent, «Ce n'est pas une question que ce gouvernement va trop vite et trop loin, c'est une question que le gouvernement s'en va dans la mauvaise direction quant à la plupart de leurs politiques ici à l'Assemblée législative.»

2100

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I want to join with my colleague the member for Cochrane South in condemning the government for yet another time allocation motion. I know the government House leader and others on the government benches like to stand up and say, "Well, this is how many we've done and this is how many the Liberals may have done and this is how many the NDP have done." The fact of the matter is that we're comparing apples and oranges entirely in terms of this government's approach to what democracy means in this province and what any other government in the past, including former Tories I might add, has seen as the traditions of this important place.

This is the government of Bill 7. This is the government of the brand-new Ontario Labour Relations Act: without one minute of public hearings, not one minute of committee hearings, rammed it through in less than a month with no discussion with anyone ahead of time, just dropped it in

the middle of the floor, let the mushroom cloud form over this place and rammed it through in less than a month — unprecedented, unheard of.

Never in the history of this province has any Premier, particularly former Tory premiers, ever changed even a comma in the Ontario Labour Relations Act without picking up the phone and at the very least talking to the president of the Ontario Federation of Labour. This government just completely ignored everyone — no discussion, no negotiation, no consultation, except with their pals — and then rammed it through in less than a month.

What did that bring us? I'm talking about this government's record as it relates to time allocation. What has that bill given us today? Certainly it's seen scabs reintroduced back into this province in probably the most ugly fashion we could imagine.

Go talk to the workers who were at PC World, where the employees there finally had to take over the plant in order to get the democracy they were entitled to, because scabs were being used to keep that plant going. As a result of their action, I might add, and as a result of the support of their union, the CAW, and workers all across this province who showed up at that site by the busloads, the corporation was forced to bring in a mediator and ultimately a collective agreement was got through binding arbitration.

If they hadn't done that, they'd still be out there striking just like the workers at S.A. Armstrong. The S.A. Armstrong workers have been on strike now for over 17 months because there are scabs in that place and the scabs are keeping that plant going. This government brought that about as a result of Bill 7, which was brought in in the most undemocratic fashion you could imagine, similar to what we've got going here on this time allocation motion.

Just today my leader talked about Goldcorp. For 18 months those workers and their families and that relatively small community have been held to economic hostage by the fact that there are scabs in that workplace doing the jobs of those workers.

Not one minute of discussion in this place or in committee, let alone the public and the people who will be affected, when that law was brought in here, and here we are again with another time allocation motion.

In Friday's Hamilton Spectator there was an article about scab-herders, a US firm that's being brought in, professional scab-herders. What's their slogan? This is something. This is a piece of work. This is in their brochure, "Because you never know what tomorrow's union negotiations could bring...bring in Huffmaster Associates." "We believe there's a future in this," said the fellow that's the head of it, "and hope that it will grow in the next year."

That's the kind of jobs you're creating in Mike Harris's Ontario: US firms that come up here to hire people to be scabs, brought in and made legal under a law similar to the time allocation motion we have here today, at least the concept of shutting down democracy. That's your legend of Bill 7.

Of course Bill 26, we know what had to happen there in terms of what our colleague Alvin Curling did. We forced the government once again into some semblance of hearings. Even they were totally inadequate, but better than what you were trying to do two years ago now, I guess it was, as you tried to ram that omnibus bully bill through with next to no public input — unprecedented.

Bill 49: yet another piece of anti-worker legislation brought in here, and the word from the government was, "You don't need any public hearings on this; it's only minor housekeeping, nothing you need to worry about."

Hon Mr Sterling: On a point of order, Speaker: Perhaps he would like to outline how many hours of public consultation there was on the social contract.

The Acting Speaker: Minister, that's not a point of order.

Mr Christopherson: I'd love to debate that issue with the honourable government House leader. Particularly, if he had been listening, he would have noted very carefully that when I talked about Bill 7 I was talking about the fact that there was no discussion with labour people about that at all — not one phone call; not a single meeting; not one minute. You wrote that bill, you had it done outside this place, you talked to your corporate pals and it was dropped in this place. This province was told, "Eat it, whether you like it or not," so don't talk to me about comparing our consultation methods with anything you're doing now, because it won't stand up at all.

If I might continue on the motion before us, once again, in Bill 49, an attempt to shut down democracy. They even introduced that bill when the labour leaders were out of the province at a national conference. They were told: "Don't worry about it. There's nothing in here of any major significance." Eventually we were able to shame the government and get enough publicity around what was really in that anti-worker bill and there were four weeks of province-wide hearings. When we had those hearings, they got slaughtered in every single community across this province. Their backbenchers couldn't wait to get out of those committee rooms and get back home to the safety of their constituency offices because facing the people was just about as unpleasant as it gets.

Bill 99 is another example. Again, the time limitation — I'm just mentioning a few that are consistent with the kind of shutting down of basic democracy and the traditions of democracy in this place. Bill 99: This government's attack on the most vulnerable workers in the province, injured workers, and at the end of the day, after the government had promised we would have province-wide hearings — oh yes, we had the Minister of Labour of the day on her feet on behalf of the government saying: "We will have province-wide public hearings. Don't worry, we will do that" — we ended up with a mere six days on a bill that even I acknowledge was much more far-reaching than Bill 49.

Bill 49 wasn't nearly as far-reaching as Bill 99, but we got four weeks on Bill 49. What didn't they like? They didn't like the fact that there were more people who came out opposed to them than in favour. That was the last time

any piece of labour legislation saw the light of day in terms of any kind of meaningful public input.

I can't leave the issue of Bill 99 without also saying, in addition to taking \$15 billion out of the pockets of injured workers and giving \$6 billion of it back to your corporate pals, one of the very last things they did in committee, after the public was long shut out of the system, was to introduce a motion that they never talked about at first reading or second reading or indicated in any of the committee hearings or allowed anyone to comment on. There was a final amendment in there that made all their new time limitations retroactive.

Tens of thousands of injured workers' cases are going to be affected by that, Speaker, and I suggest to you tens of thousands of Ontarians are going to be denied basic democratic rights because they don't know about the new time limitations. The government knows that. They're planning on it. They've done nothing to hire the kind of people who are necessary to deal with the backlog that will come in if every one of those active cases sent in their notice within the time frame.

It was a deliberate attempt, first, to deny the public knowledge that it was happening and, second, the resulting legislation will have literally tens of thousands of people denied an opportunity to even have their case heard because at the last minute this government snuck in, in the sneakiest of fashions, a powerful amendment that took away even more democratic rights.

Here we are today debating a time allocation motion yet again and in a fashion that I think my House leader argued very effectively we've never seen before — unprecedented. Why is it whenever we talk about anything undemocratic about this government, the word "unprecedented" always follows? That's because they are. No one has ever witnessed anything like this. While some of you may be naïve enough to believe that's something you ought to be proud of, let me tell you, when they write the history books about this time it will definitely be some of the darkest days of democracy in the province of Ontario.

The time allocation motion itself, in the few minutes that I have left, Bills 64 to 69 all deal — here we go again. After a while you get to know their formula. Most of the bills start out, "An Act to simplify government processes and to improve efficiency in," and then they name the ministry. That's basically what these are.

We've talked about this before, about what this red tape commission really is all about and what cutting red tape really is about with this government. It's not just eliminating redundant language or duplication of processes or paperwork. It can be, but that's not what this government means when they talk about streamlining and efficiency. When they talk about that, they point to places like the United States and Alberta and say, "They've got the right idea of how to run government and that's where we're going."

It's interesting. My friend Maureen McCarthy brought to my attention the article in yesterday's *Hamilton Spectator* with the headline, "Booming Edmonton Plagued by Poverty," and it says in part that with one of the strongest

economies one in 12 Edmonton families with children lived in absolute poverty in 1995 — one in 12. That's 8.1%. That's for 1995. In 1993 it was 3.3% — from 3.3% to 8.1%. Then when the social services minister was asked, guess what his answer was? "I just find it hard to believe that in an economy where we have 5.6% unemployment and people are up and working that we're worse than six cities in Canada."

Then it goes on to say, that's the end of the quote, "How can the capital of the province with the greatest growth and the lowest unemployment in the country also be the poverty capital of Canada? 'Easy,' says Brian Bechtel, head of the social planning council. 'Sure Edmontonians are working, but that doesn't mean they aren't poor.'"

Sound familiar? This government likes to stand up and say: "We've got this booming economy and now we've got all this money that's going to pay off the debt and, oh, the unemployment rate is dropping in some areas. Everything is wonderful." That is not the case. That's not the reality and that's why I wanted to make mention of those labour laws, because when you take a look at what you're really doing to people, working middle-class families, the reality is your numbers may look good but people are hurting.

The article written by Marta Gold of the *Edmonton Journal* goes on to say, "It's the same strategy the United States is following where you have a very low minimum wage and low taxes to attract industry and you just let the labour market take care of itself," says Gordon Laxer, a political economist at the University of Ottawa. Says Mr Laxer: "It's the Alberta advantage. Take advantage of the poor and give advantage to corporations and the rich."

When we deal with bills by this government that talk about promoting efficiency and streamlining and in the same breath they talk about how wonderful things are in Alberta and how much they like the way the economy is going in the United States, let's take a real look at what happens to the most vulnerable and to working, middle-class families and our communities. They lose. Your rich corporate friends win. Ordinary Ontarians lose.

The Acting Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members; this will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 2114 to 2119.

The Acting Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please rise, one at a time.

Ayes

Baird, John R.
Barrett, Toby
Beaubien, Marcel
Boushy, Dave
Brown, Jim
Chudleigh, Ted
Clement, Tony
DeFaria, Carl
Doyle, Ed

Hardeman, Ernie
Hastings, John
Hudak, Tim
Johns, Helen
Johnson, Bert
Johnson, David
Johnson, Ron
Jordan, W. Leo
Kells, Morley

O'Toole, John
Preston, Peter
Rollins, E.J. Douglas
Saunderson, William
Shea, Derwyn
Sheehan, Frank
Spina, Joseph
Sterling, Norman W.
Stewart, R. Gary

Elliott, Brenda
Fisher, Barbara
Ford, Douglas B.
Fox, Gary
Galt, Doug
Gilchrist, Steve
Grimmett, Bill
Guzzo, Garry J.

Klees, Frank
Leadston, Gary L.
Martiniuk, Gerry
Maves, Bart
McLean, Allan K.
Murdoch, Bill
Mushinski, Marilyn
Newman, Dan

Tascona, Joseph N.
Tumbull, David
Vankoughnet, Bill
Villeneuve, Noble
Wettlaufer, Wayne
Wilson, Jim
Wood, Bob
Young, Terence H.

Bradley, James J.
Brown, Michael A.
Caplan, David

Conway, Sean G.
Crozier, Bruce
Gerretsen, John

Patten, Richard
Silipo, Tony
Wildman, Bud

The Acting Speaker: All those opposed will please rise, one at a time.

Nays

Bartolucci, Rick
Bisson, Gilles

Christopherson, David
Churley, Marilyn

Lalonde, Jean-Marc
Martin, Tony

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 51; the nays are 15.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

It being close to 9:30, the House stands adjourned until 1:30 tomorrow afternoon.

The House adjourned at 2122.

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No. 263A

N° 263A

ISSN 1180-2987

**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

First Session, 36th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Première session, 36^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Wednesday 17 December 1997

Mercredi 17 décembre 1997

Speaker
Honourable Chris Stockwell

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Président
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 17 December 1997

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 17 décembre 1997

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ADVANCE WARNING LIGHTS

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur): Almost exactly a year ago today the Ministry of Transportation in Thunder Bay installed a set of advance warning lights on the Thunder Bay Expressway at Balsam Street. Various organizations in my community, including the OPP, city council and long-distance truckers, had lobbied for 14 years to get these lights in place to improve safety on the expressway.

On behalf of all those who worked towards this goal, including the Hodder Avenue citizens' advisory group, I want to thank former minister Palladini for giving this project the green light.

I am pleased to report to the Legislature that the system is working. People use the warning light system and no major accidents have taken place at Balsam Street since the installation last year.

Because of that success, I am asking the new Minister of Transportation today to make the decision to extend the advance warning light system to all the intersections on the expressway. The OPP, truckers and all of us in the region who use the expressway on a regular basis are still very conscious of the real danger we face as we travel this section of the Trans-Canada Highway.

A full system of warning lights at John Street, Oliver Road, the Harbour Expressway and Arthur Street would clearly be a good and inexpensive investment to make, particularly if the installation can help avoid future accidents and fatalities.

At a time of year when many of us feel less secure driving the roads and highways due to cutbacks in winter road maintenance, I hope the minister will see this request as an opportunity to improve safety, alleviate all drivers' concerns and make a decision that will be of benefit to us all.

EDUCATION REFORM

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): In Riverdale, our schools are very much a part of our communities, as I'm sure they are all over Ontario. I spent this morning, instead of down here at the Pink Palace, going to some

events in schools in my riding. Two of the schools I went to are inner-city schools. One is the Jones Avenue adult learning centre and the other the Dundas elementary school.

I would say to everybody that if they need some good reasons why funding should not be cut any more in education, go and visit those schools. At Jones Avenue school, adult students from all over the world, in their native costumes from their home countries, performed.

At the Dundas school, the lunch program served about 500 children today, many of whom are poor and new Canadians. The community is very involved in the food program there. Shirley Lam, who is a lamb, is from the community. She is one of the supervisors there and the chief cook. This program has been around for a very long time. We do not want to see it end. I can guarantee you that it will end if these cuts go forward. That school will also lose its international language program, after-school activity program, clerical assistant, full assistants and on and on and on. We cannot let that happen.

Q-SSIS CHRISTMAS DINNER

Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Centre): I am pleased to rise in the House today as the member for Scarborough Centre to provide the House with an example of the type of generosity and caring that exists within my community in Scarborough.

This holiday season will mark the eighth annual Christmas family dinner for the needy that is put on by the Q-Ssis banquet hall in my riding of Scarborough Centre. The Q-Ssis Christmas dinner will provide about 8,000 people who are clients of the Salvation Army, women's shelters, children's aid and neighbourhood churches with a wonderful Christmas dinner, and there will even be toys for the children which have been donated by the generous men and women of the Scarborough fire department.

I'm going to be pleased to volunteer my time on Monday to help serve the dinner. In fact, every one of my staff members has also chosen to volunteer his or her time to the dinner.

This is what the word "community" is all about, and I am proud of my community in Scarborough Centre and proud of Harry Kioussis and his wife, Gina, for taking the initiative to care for our community.

I challenge every member of this Legislature to volunteer their time this holiday season within their own communities, and I challenge every Scarborough member

to volunteer some time at the annual Q-Ssis dinner next week.

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING RESTRUCTURATION MUNICIPALE

Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Prescott and Russell): I would like to comment on the last set of numbers on downloading for the municipalities of my riding, Prescott and Russell. First of all, I would like to say that I have received two different sets of numbers. Which one is the right one, I don't know. As far as I'm concerned they are both wrong.

Another thing that has me confused is the fact that every municipality in my riding will have to pay for policing, but only the regional government will benefit from the provincial offences revenues. According to the figures, the counties of Prescott and Russell will be receiving \$442,000 from provincial offences collected by police services provided and paid for by the municipalities.

Les gens de Prescott et Russell n'auront pas seulement à payer des taxes pour contrer ces transferts aux municipalités. En plus, ils devront payer 442 \$ mille en contraventions provinciales.

Your charts fail to recognize that the community re-investment fund and the special transition assistance are nothing more than grants that will be phased out in the next two years, so in fact these two amounts, a total of \$8.1 million for the united counties of Prescott and Russell, are actually cuts that will be implemented in two years.

Yesterday the Minister of Municipal Affairs offered an interest-free loan to the mayor of Toronto. I would like to know if this offer is also on the table for other Ontario municipalities.

PRINCIPALS AND VICE-PRINCIPALS

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): This government has amended Bill 160 to remove principals and vice-principals from teacher bargaining units. The government has stated that during the discussions over Bill 160 between the teachers' federations and the government, the federations made a commitment that principals and vice-principals would not participate in any province-wide protest by teachers. This was supposedly, according to the government, a tradeoff for keeping those individuals as part of the federations.

It would appear that the government and its caucus have either accepted a particular version of events from the Minister of Education and Training or that the whole caucus is part of a deliberate conspiracy to promote misinformation regarding what transpired during the teacher-government discussions.

At no time during these discussions did the representatives of the teachers' federation make any commitment that principals and vice-principals would remain in schools during any teacher protest. The announcement by

the Minister of Education and Training that the government was presenting amendments that would remove principals and vice-principals from the federations was clearly a punitive and vindictive move in response to the extent to which the government lost its public support during the teacher protest over Bill 160, because parents and other people interested in education really determined and found out what Bill 160 was about and what the government was intending to do, and that is remove more money from kids' education in this province.

TEACHERS' PENSIONS

Mr Jim Brown (Scarborough West): In recent media stories there were reports of massive bank profits. Canada's Big Six banks had cumulative profits of \$7.5 billion, and we all know that the banks nickel-and-dime consumers and small business people. The \$7.5 billion for the Big Six banks across Canada is another record year. Many say these profits are excessive and obscene and come at the expense of the little guy, and I agree.

But the banks are not the only ones making billions in profits. The Ontario teachers' pension fund will make \$6 billion to \$8 billion this year, nearly as much as all the banks all across Canada. If you thought the banks were making excessive profits, Ontarians need to take a closer look at our teachers' pension fund, which is being bonused by taxpayers to the tune of \$430 million per year for 22 years. We spend \$1.2 billion a year on teachers' pensions, nearly 10% of our education budget. We're paying a bonus on an already profitable public pension fund. That deal was struck by the NDP and we're only two years into it with 20 to go.

If teachers' unions reduced the retirement factor to 85, thousands of teachers would retire, saving \$400 million annually. Net take-home pay difference is negligible and thousands would get a chance to teach. I urge teachers to use your pension surplus wisely and think of the kids.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'd like to request the member be given 15 seconds more to say how much the Conservative Party has collected from its corporate friends.

The Speaker: Agreed? No. I heard a no.

1340

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich): We have an interesting story that comes to us from Hamilton in the Hamilton Spectator, "Welfare Fraud: Who's Fooling Whom?" This must certainly be an embarrassment for the current government.

People in Ontario don't want to see welfare fraud. They would be very happy with the facts about a government that is taking the time to ensure that people who are abusing the system are removed from the system. But what this government does is it goes much further than that. It decides to take numbers and completely and very creatively overexaggerate and in fact give out inaccurate

information about welfare fraud and what this government's record is on it.

But you're not getting away with it. People who are actually like a dog with a bone are after the Minister of Community and Social Services to find out the real numbers, and find out that the numbers are bogus, that you have overinflated numbers to show how much fraud is in the system and what you are saving the taxpayers.

This is absolutely unconscionable. The truth of the matter is that this government's credibility is on the line and today in this House I would like to see the Minister of Community and Social Services on her feet to give the real numbers. You don't need to give inaccurate bogus information. It's a good thing if you stop the fraud, but it is a bad thing when you give inaccurate and overly exaggerated numbers. We expect an apology in this House and the people of Ontario want to know what you're really doing with the numbers.

EDUCATION REFORM

Mr Wayne Lessard (Windsor-Riverside): We know that the real havoc and confusion in our public school system over Bill 160 is just beginning. This government's failure to listen will mean that newly elected school boards are expected to be up and running by January 1 without any clear mandate and without knowing what their funding formula is going to be, and we still don't know what the regulations will be that will centralize power in Toronto.

Bill 160 gives Ontario's 5,000 principals until April 1 to decide whether they wish to retain their jobs, but according to Jim McMahon, principal at St Bernard school in Windsor, there are just too many unanswered questions to make a well-informed decision. They have no idea what the impact of this will be on issues like job security, contract length, seniority and job description.

What does this government have to hide? Why don't they come clean to the thousands of people who are going to be impacted directly by this government's haste to ram through their wornheaded agenda?

The removal of principals and vice-principals from teachers' federations is another example of the Mike Harris heavy-handed, vindictive approach to government. It has absolutely nothing to do with improving the quality of education and I fear is likely to lead to managers and accountants running our schools, not something I look forward to on behalf of my son Brett who's a senior kindergarten student at King Edward in Windsor.

CHRISTKINDLESMARKTS

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener): In the spirit of the season, I rise today to advise the House that a cherished 400-year-old German tradition has been introduced to Canada in my riding of Kitchener.

Christkindlesmarkts have been a cherished tradition in Germany for more than 400 years in commemoration of

the special place that the Christ child holds in German celebration at this time of year.

As the custom of giving gifts at this festive time grew, so too did the markets. They became a popular venue for the sale of toys and other presents, for craft items and gifts and for seasonal German food specialties.

Today the Christkindlesmarkts are world renowned for their special ceremonies, festivities and entertainment, outstanding selection of gifts and foods and elaborate city decorations.

The image of a golden candlelit angel, the Rauschgoldengel, has become a beautiful symbol of these celebrated German markets. The Christkindlesmarkt held at the Kitchener city hall marks the first time this wonderful tradition was held in Canada. It honours the city's German heritage while welcoming everyone to share the special magic of the festive season.

I want to congratulate the organizers of this event, in particular, Tony Bergmeier and the Kitchener German business community, for their tremendous work in bringing the tradition of Christkindlesmarkt to Ontario.

I want to express my best wishes of the season to everyone in this House. I wish you happiness and joy this Christmas season. Stille Nacht, Heilige Nacht.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON REGULATIONS AND PRIVATE BILLS

Mr Toby Barrett (Norfolk): I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on regulations and private bills and move its adoption.

Clerk at the Table (Mr Todd Decker): Your committee begs to report the following bills without amendment:

Bill Pr94, An Act respecting The Jamaican Canadian Association

Bill Pr95, An Act respecting Institute for Advanced Judaic Studies.

Your committee further recommends that the fees, and the actual costs of printing at all stages, be remitted on Bill Pr94, An Act respecting The Jamaican Canadian Association, and Bill Pr95, An Act respecting Institute for Advanced Judaic Studies.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

MOTIONS

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): I move that notwithstanding standing order 95(a), the House will meet in

the morning of Thursday, December 18, 1997, from 10 am to 12 noon for the consideration of government business, with routine proceedings to commence at 1:30 pm.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

ORAL QUESTIONS

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs, and it's a question on your downloading or dumping announcement. You acknowledged yesterday that you dumped about \$500 million of extra costs on to municipalities. You said to municipalities that you feel they can easily cut \$500 million. In fact, you went on to say that any councillor who wouldn't cut their fair share of it "should go out and look for another job."

I talked to the mayor of Kitchener this morning, Mayor Zehr, a responsible individual, and he indicated that in Kitchener alone they're going to have to cut roughly \$5.3 million because of your dumping. In the region of Waterloo I gather it's \$19 million. They've already cut to the bone and they don't know how you came up with that number. My question to you is this: Did you, before you made this announcement, review the impact municipality by municipality and did you assure yourself that these cuts were realistic?

Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): In response to the member from the opposition, what we've asked the municipalities to do is to assist the province in getting the fiscal house in order. We've asked municipalities of less than 100,000 people to find 1.7% of their expenditures — if they can find it, there would be a zero tax increase — and municipalities between 100,000 and 500,000, 3.1%. We believe that municipalities should be able, without any difficulty, to find 1.7% of their expenditures. If they do that, there would be absolutely no tax increase. The 1.7% relates to the elimination of the municipal support grant which the municipalities were advised of some time ago.

1350

Mr Phillips: I think the mayors and the councillors listening to you understand you don't know what you're talking about. I understand your comment yesterday, that flip sort of, "Well, they should go out and find another job." That's how much you think of them.

Our municipalities, for years, have been cutting their sources to the bone. Police services, fire services, cut to the bone. They have been going through years of reductions, and they're under pressure without your dumping \$500 million of added costs on to them. With your announcement you have dumped \$500 million on to the municipalities. That is about 4% of their spending, an enormous dumping of your responsibility on to the property tax.

I talked again this morning to the mayor of St Catharines. Since 1992 they've had no tax increases in St Catharines, but you've dumped about \$3 million of extra costs on to them, about \$25 million in the region, and they say you're cutting the heart out of municipal services. You're the municipalities' voice. They assume you know what you're talking about. Was this proposal to dump \$500 million on to the property tax a proposal that you personally brought to cabinet?

Hon Mr Leach: The member of the opposition is very quick to point out areas that say they are having difficulty, but I can refer perhaps to another municipal politician, and that's your former colleague Mr Chiarelli, who is presently the chair of Ottawa region. Mr Chiarelli has taken over the chair, has had an opportunity to review the numbers and review the effects on the municipality and has stated quite categorically —

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Minister.

Hon Mr Leach: I think that, as can be seen, a member of their own caucus of just a few months ago said he can keep his vow to keep a zero tax increase in Ottawa. In Peel the treasurer of the region of Peel says, "We're in good shape." The new chair of York region also says: "This doesn't put us in too bad a position.... We've always been concerned about whether it would be revenue-neutral, and it looks like it...is."

That's the response from responsible politicians in responsible areas of the province. That's what they believe can be done when they're asked to assist the province in getting rid of the mess that we had to inherit financially.

The Speaker: Final supplementary.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): Just for the record, Mr Chiarelli, the chair of Ottawa-Carleton, is looking for a further \$56 million as a result of your downloading.

As you know, Minister, the Kingston area municipalities have worked with you collectively to restructure and to jointly find savings of some \$16 million. Now, with two weeks to go, the new city of Kingston finds it has to cut at least another \$5 million in addition to the \$5 million they've already lost in municipal support grant. I say "has to" because it cannot raise property taxes under the restructuring agreement.

Minister, when you spoke at AMO you promised municipalities like Kingston a new partnership. Let me just quote you what you said:

"What I do know from my days at the TTC is how frustrating it can be to attempt to plan, only to have assumptions change because of a change in transfers from other governments. This points to a need to get a system in place that advises you early so that you can plan to deal with transfer and manage local issues, and that is my commitment to you."

Kingston and other municipalities feel betrayed by you. They are stunned by your government's incompetence, by dropping this information so late, and because the information is still wrong. Minister, be a real partner: Stop

the dumping, stop passing the cost of your irresponsible tax cut on to municipalities.

The Speaker: Thank you. Minister.

Hon Mr Leach: I can say to the member of the opposition that the city of Kingston is to be congratulated. They did a great job of restructuring and I think they're going to find there are substantial savings as a result of that restructuring. We know that, just as in the city of Toronto, the city of Kingston may experience some difficulties in the initial year in realizing those savings. We're quite prepared to make an offer to the city of Kingston, in the same manner as we made to the city of Toronto, that if they have some problems in 1998, we will be there to assist them and they can repay that out of the substantial savings they'll realize in future years.

COMMUNITY CARE

Mr Alex Cullen (Ottawa West): My question is to the Minister of Health. Last week I asked about funding in Ottawa-Carleton to meet the growing demand for home care and the fact that home care services were being cut as a result of your ministry's refusal to meet that need. You referred the question to the minister responsible for seniors, who gave a non-answer.

Yesterday, in reply to the member for York South, you told this Legislature that your assistant deputy minister had met the day before with the Ottawa-Carleton community care access centre and that he had indicated to them there would be no reduction in services, implying that last month's service cuts to home care were being rescinded.

Today we learned that last month's cuts only met 60% of the targeted reduction and that in fact your officials met with the CCAC in order to avoid a second round of even deeper service cuts, which would have eliminated 75% of homemaking services throughout the holiday season, created waiting lists for new clients and cut services by a further one third.

Your statement yesterday involves one-time funding to avoid this second round of cuts only; it doesn't fix the cuts that were announced in November, it doesn't meet the increase in demand. Will you ensure there will be sufficient funding to meet the needs of our sick and frail elderly in Ottawa-Carleton?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health): Mr Speaker, through you to the minister for seniors.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order. You get to ask them, and they get to answer them.

Hon Cameron Jackson (Minister without Portfolio [Seniors Issues]): First of all, I want to indicate that we have had a series of conversations with the CCAC in Ottawa-Carleton and we have undertaken a review. In the course of the meeting we had yesterday, we did not talk about services cuts; we talked about the amount of expanded service that has been made available to seniors and the disabled in the Ottawa area. In fact, we are awaiting some additional information from that board,

which they agreed to, that will assist us in ensuring Ottawa-Carleton receives all the services it needs to provide services for seniors.

The Speaker: Supplementary, the member for Cornwall.

Mr John C. Cleary (Cornwall): My question is to the Minister of Health. One of my constituents, former taxi driver Joseph Charbonneau, had all his fingers amputated in 1996. Without fingers, he cannot even open a can of juice. Mr Charbonneau was grateful for the service he had received. Four hours each week a homemaker would come into his home to help him with his cooking, cleaning and other things. However, because of your ministry's cuts, he will only receive two hours every second week, four hours a month. Mr Charbonneau is afraid and upset over the services being cut. He is only on a meagre disability allowance and he cannot afford extra help. According to the director of the local community access centre, the problem is financial. The centre is reassessing all cases and making cutbacks. They are forced to do this, leaving Mr Charbonneau helpless and unattended. Minister, will you pledge to protect people like Mr Charbonneau? Will you ensure he receives the services he needs?

Hon Mr Jackson: I'd like to reassure the member opposite that the community care access centre in his constituency is doing an outstanding job. One of their requirements is to review each case on its own merits. We know the previous system of delivery of home care service in this province did not have adequate checks and balances to ensure that those people receive service only as long as they need it and not any further. Part of the review is designed to ensure that services are given to those who require them and that when services are no longer needed, they are removed from individuals.

The suggestion that service levels are being cut across the board is inaccurate. Home care programs are constantly under review and the program delivery is constantly being changed and updated. We're pleased that there are no cuts in that area.

1400

The Speaker: Final supplementary, member for St Catharines.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): My question as well is to the Minister of Health. We know that the long-term-care situation in our area requires a lot more funding, but I want to address to you the closing of hospitals, which is precipitating a lot of this problem.

Premier Harris, when he was leader of the Conservative Party during the last campaign, said, "Certainly, I can guarantee you it's not my plan to close hospitals." The local commission which was set up to close hospitals in our area was given a mandate which included a \$44-million cut in hospital operating funds. As a result, Hotel Dieu Hospital in St Catharines, Douglas Memorial Hospital in Fort Erie, Port Colborne hospital, West Lincoln Memorial Hospital in Grimsby and the Niagara-on-the-Lake hospital are all under the knife, could all be shut or radically altered.

Will the minister assure the House today that in the area of the province which has the largest per capita number of seniors in all of Ontario, the Niagara Peninsula, you will guarantee that none of those hospitals in the Niagara region will be closed and that you will stop kicking them out of the hospital more sickly and more quickly?

Hon Mr Jackson: I will refer it to the Minister of Health.

Hon Mrs Witmer: As you know, those hospitals are going to be reviewed. What we need to remember is that under previous governments we had a tremendous closing of hospital beds. Unfortunately, we were spending resources on space that was not being used; we were subsidizing administrations that no longer had the responsibilities they formerly had.

Our government recognized that there was a change in responding to the needs of the Ontario population. We recognized that we needed to start investing money into long-term care and into community-based services. That's exactly what we've done: We have invested money where there is the need. That is in the long-term care and in the community-based access. We will continue to respond to the needs of people.

TUITION FEES

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): I have a question to the Minister of Education. The more we learn about the government's tuition increases, the worse it gets. Let's consider the case of one student at Durham College. With tuition currently at \$1,700 a year and rent of \$550 a month, plus groceries, a phone bill, plus a bus pass, she manages to get by on an annual budget of \$8,800. Currently, she borrows \$7,200 from OSAP, so this student is well on her way to being in serious debt by the time she completes her post-secondary education. Now you've come along with your tuition increases to make it even worse.

Your per capita funding for post-secondary education ranks at the bottom of the heap in all of Canada. Can you tell us why this student at Durham College and other students across Ontario should pay for your tax cut to the wealthiest people in Ontario?

Hon David Johnson (Minister of Education and Training): I would say that this student and all other students would be interested in the excellence in our education system at the post-secondary level, in the universities and the colleges, being maintained and being improved. The announcements made by the Minister of Finance provide for an extra \$80 million into the universities and colleges student loan program over the next two years, to start with.

In addition, to the degree that universities and colleges decide, if they do decide, to put tuition fees up, 30% of that revenue will go to assist students such as the very student that you've outlined here today, students who are in need. To this point in the history of this government,

some \$57 million have been allocated to students in need through tuition increases in the previous years, that 30%.

In addition, of course there is the student opportunity fund, some \$600 million across universities and colleges to help students in need.

Mr Hampton: The gist I got from the answer is that the government's going to help the wealthiest people in Ontario, but poor kids should help other poor kids. That's this government's answer.

The Premier brought his own special wit and his own special perspective to the issue yesterday, and I'm sure every student in Ontario would appreciate the Premier's comments. He was asked if soaring tuition fees aren't a problem for middle-class Ontarians. Here's what he said: "Yes, it's quite true, although I have been told that the income tax cut to middle-income people was very handy." How incredibly arrogant.

Minister, let me tell you how much money this student at Durham College gets from your tax cut to the wealthy. She doesn't get a penny; not one penny out of your tax cut.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Question, please.

Mr Hampton: Or take someone with an income of \$30,000 a year. They might, if they're lucky, get \$6 a week. Can you tell me, is that going to be —

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon David Johnson: The leader of the third party gets away with making an incorrect statement that the tax cut is to help the wealthy. People of all income categories benefit from the income tax cut. Indeed, who benefits the most are those at the lower end in terms of the fact that their reduction is actually higher than those at the higher incomes. So people in all income categories benefit. As a result, we see that the economy is doing much better. People are investing the taxes they've saved back in the economy. There are more jobs; more people are employed. There's no question about it. Ontario is leading the way in terms of economic growth across this nation.

The Speaker: Answer, please.

Hon David Johnson: The opportunity fund has not been funded by students. The \$600-million opportunity fund is funded by people of all ages.

The Speaker: Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr Wayne Lessard (Windsor-Riverside): I don't believe that poor and middle-income students believe your convoluted answer to that question. The Premier expects middle-income families to use their tax cuts to pay for their children's education, but I want to tell you a little secret: Most of your tax cut is going to the wealthiest in Ontario and they're not using it to pay for their children's education; they're using it for fancy cars and expensive vacations.

Now the Premier's answer is to push an income-contingent loan plan, and he's wondering why students aren't embracing that with open arms. But they recognize that your plan would put them in the grips of compound interest, that heavy debt loads are just going to increase based on that income-contingent plan, and by the time university students graduate and send their own kids to

university, they could be faced with debts of up to \$50,000.

Why are you making parents and students pay for your tax cut to the most well-off in Ontario?

Hon David Johnson: To reiterate again, the tax cut is of benefit to people of all income groups. Indeed, 64% of the benefit goes to income earners with incomes of less than \$75,000 a year.

I can only say in response to the member opposite that the movements we're making in terms of post-secondary are to ensure excellence in our education system in future years, to ensure colleges and universities have the ability, the leeway, to deal with their situation. In addition to the \$80 million that we're investing over the next two years, they will have latitude through tuition.

At the same time, we need to help those students —

The Speaker: Answer, please.

Hon David Johnson: — who are at the lower end of the ability to pay, those who are in need. We do that through 30% of any tuition increase going to help those students in the opportunity fund, the \$600-million —

The Speaker: New question, third party.

1410

EDUCATION FINANCING

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): To the Minister of Education again: Perhaps the minister can explain at some point why all kinds of Ontarians haven't seen this tax gift, but certainly those in the highest-income brackets like it very much.

In only 14 days, Ontario school boards will be entering a new fiscal year, and this is called the stub year because it's going to run from January until June. Amazingly, with 14 days to go they still don't know what their budget's going to be. On Monday the Minister of Finance repeated the government's mantra that school boards will receive stable and secure funding, but that doesn't fit with what an ad hoc committee of education finance officials have been saying. They have said that your proposed funding formula will not provide stable funding as initially stated by the Minister of Education.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Question.

Mr Hampton: Minister, can you tell us, has the stub-year funding model changed substantially since you received your report from the ad hoc committee of financial officers?

Hon David Johnson (Minister of Education and Training): Staff from the Ministry of Education have met with a number of officials. I believe we're referring to the same group of people; you call them an ad hoc committee. The Minister of Finance has met with them earlier this month, taken into account their views, and there are different circumstances across Ontario. There are different spending rates etc. The formula, the amount of money that will be involved is being fine-tuned. The Ministry of Education is working on it to ensure that not only it is stable, as we promised, but it is fair and equitable to each and every board across Ontario.

Yes, we do listen when people come forward, such as this ad hoc group, and we do try to incorporate their views into the final result.

Mr Hampton: The question was, has the funding formula changed substantially since the education finance officers said the existing one was not good enough? I take it from the minister's answer it hasn't changed substantially. He didn't mention any changes.

Here's the crux of the problem. Let's take the Durham Board of Education. You know the Durham board, the one that won an international prize, international recognition for being one of the best boards of education in the world? Despite your government's cuts to funding junior kindergarten, the Durham board wanted to keep JK, so they said they were going to use some of their reserve funds to fund junior kindergarten. They weren't going to raise property taxes; they'd use some of their reserves to fund junior kindergarten over the last couple of years.

The Speaker: Question.

Mr Hampton: The question is this, and it's an easy question: When the Durham Board of Education receives its funding allocation for the stub year, will it include the amount of money that the Durham board is spending on junior kindergarten out of their reserve funds now?

Hon David Johnson: I am not here today to make an announcement with regard to the stub-year funding. But I will say to the member opposite that I am aware of the Durham Board of Education's program with regard to junior kindergarten, and there are a few other boards across the province in the same situation. That is one of the issues we are studying at this time, along with a number of other issues. We want to make sure that the formula that comes forward is fair to Durham and to all the other boards. The formula is being fine-tuned at this time and it will be released in the very near future.

The Speaker: Supplementary.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): It's obvious that the Minister of Education and Training is not here to make an announcement on the stub-year funding formula. He wants to wait until the Legislature is no longer sitting, either Friday or Monday, so he doesn't have to deal with questions in the House. As a matter of fact, I believe one of the large periodicals in Toronto here referred to the government's cowardice in this regard because they intended to make the announcement after the House is closed down.

Could it be that the government is having a difficult time coming up with a formula that meets the criteria for stable and secure funding or could it be that the new Toronto mega-board will indeed find itself \$60 million short in the stub year as it anticipates? Can the minister guarantee that when the stub-year allocations are finally released for every school board in the province, every board will have exactly the same money to spend in the first eight months of 1998 as they had in the first eight months of 1997, allowing for enrolment changes?

Hon Mr Johnson: It's interesting that the member opposite and his party, I'm sure, have accused the

government of going too far, too fast. "You're doing too much, you're trying to go too fast."

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Minister?

Hon David Johnson: There may be others who think the government is going too far, too fast.

Here's an issue where the government is considering this matter very carefully. The member opposite has raised the issue of enrolment, for example, and junior kindergarten has been raised. These are issues that are under study and require careful attention. The government is doing that, is looking very carefully at all the issues that are being brought forward by the ad hoc officials, for example, and others who are communicating, attempting to be as fair and equitable as we can.

We are fine-tuning the formula. It requires a great deal of effort to ensure fairness. We will be arriving at the final numbers in the very near future. The boards will have those numbers, and I believe they entitle each and every board and enable each and every board across the province to carry on the same kinds of programs they're carrying on in 1997 in an excellent fashion.

TUITION FEES

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William): My question is for the Minister of Education. When it comes to tuition fees, your government is indeed going too far, too fast and in the wrong direction.

You have allowed another 20% increase in tuition fees on top of the 30% you have already jacked up fees for college and university students. Under your government, tuition fees have soared to become the second-highest in the country and they are going to go even higher. You have, overall, sanctioned a 60% increase in fees and you have guaranteed that debt loads for graduates will go higher and higher.

Your answer is to say that you'll make it easier for students to repay their loans, that if their incomes aren't high enough to repay their loans, they can just take longer to pay them back. Minister, do you really think this is an answer: just give students more time to pay and leave them crippled with debt for years and years?

Hon David Johnson (Minister of Education and Training): First of all we need to recognize that tuition fees have not gone up at all as of this point in time. The individual colleges and universities will make those decisions based on local situations and local needs.

Second, I would remind the member again that this government has taken I think one of the most important initiatives in post-secondary education in establishing the opportunity fund, some \$600 million and still growing, for students in need at universities and colleges.

Finally I would say, if the member opposite wished to be helpful, I hope she would join with me in discussing this matter with the federal government in terms of the \$2.1 billion the federal government has cut out of health, post-secondary and social programs, and second in terms

of establishing a fair income-contingent loan repayment program for the students in Ontario.

Mrs McLeod: Do you not understand that whatever repayment plan you put in place, it is unacceptable to have students graduating with debt loads of \$27,000 or \$28,000 or more? Do you not understand that you cannot use a new, proposed loan system as a cover for higher and higher tuition costs and higher and higher debt loads? That's the point I'm trying to get you to address, Minister, because tuition fees have gone up and they will go up again.

It's not just the new 20% increase that you've sanctioned, it's the fact that you are allowing deregulation of fees in a whole host of programs. Deregulation means no limits whatsoever, that tuition fees can go wherever the universities and colleges want to take them.

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The MBA program at Queen's costs \$52,000 for two years. If costs in a deregulated world even start moving in that direction, only the wealthiest students will dare go into professional fields or graduate programs. Minister, are you not prepared to set any limits at all, or are you prepared to let certain programs and certain —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you. Minister.

Hon David Johnson: I'm reminded of what the vice-chair of the Canadian Federation of Students said earlier this year. She said, "I think the biggest cause of tuition increase is the funding cuts that have come down over the last two years in the form of Canada health and social transfer from the Liberal federal government." That is what the vice-chair of the Canadian student federation has said on that matter recently. I agree with her. I think she's right.

What we have done is set up the opportunity fund to assist students — it has attracted money from people in the private sector all across the province to assist students who need that sort of assistance — and we have indicated, to the degree that any university or college does put the tuition fee up, that that 30% of that money must go right back to help those students who need assistance.

FIRST NATIONS

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I have a question for the minister responsible for native affairs. It's well known that this government's barrage of legislation over the last year has been forced through without adequate consultation. Many of these bills — Bill 160, Bill 104, Bill 142, Bill 149 — have serious implications for first nations and all aboriginal peoples in this province. You made these changes without any consultation or discussions with first nations. I don't want to even speculate on what the courts might decide in the face of your failure to consult with regard to the application of these pieces of legislation.

The Premier, in his meeting last month with the Ontario chiefs, acknowledged that your government has made a mistake in not consulting with them about these bills. If

you made a mistake, what are you going to do to fix that mistake? How are you going to ensure that proper consultations take place and you amend the bills to deal with the concerns of first nations?

Hon Charles Harnick (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): The government of Ontario has entered into a very formal discussion with the Chiefs of Ontario to regularize meetings with the Premier, with myself and with the cabinet. We have had that process while we are attempting to negotiate a formal agreement. We have had a series of those meetings, certainly over the course of the past two years, where the Chiefs of Ontario and other first nations leaders have been able to get together with members of the cabinet to discuss the very issues the member is talking about. We are now taking steps to formalize that process and I hope that will be completed very shortly.

Mr Wildman: It's typical of this government that you pass the legislation first, you ram it through, in many cases don't allow any amendments, and then you consult afterwards — a little bit like the Minister of Education consulting now with principals and vice-principals, after the legislation has been passed.

In this country, a provincial government doesn't have the power to make changes that affect the rights of first nations without at least talking to them first. This is what your government tried to do: change their rights and then talk to them afterwards. That's why you're in trouble.

I'll take one example: Bill 149. This government abolished the exemption for off-reserve land purchased by first nations and held in trust. This has implications for school financing because some first nations may withhold tuition for their students if they have to pay taxes on off-reserve land. How do you intend to resolve this problem so that school boards —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Minister.

Hon Mr Harnick: Any legislation that is passed by this government is legislation that has been reviewed by constitutional lawyers. We have ensured as well that treaty obligations and constitutional obligations as they relate to first nations are always complied with, and the advice that we have been given in regard to the bills that the member has talked about have followed that process. I think we have done what we have to do to ensure compliance with the law, as we do in all situations, and that has been confirmed by constitutional lawyers.

ARTS AND CULTURAL POLICY

Mr John L. Parker (York East): My question is for my friend and colleague the Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation. In my community of East York, the arts play a very important role in our economic development plans. We are home to Todmorden Mills, as you know, a museum that is built on the site of the original sawmill granted by Governor Simcoe in 1796, which stood as the foundation for the present community of East York. That site is now home to a very fine museum.

Minister, I want to thank you for the grant of \$22,590 to that museum. I know that John Bertram and his board and Susan Hughes and her staff will make very good use of that grant.

You and I both know, and I'm not sure my friend from Kingston and The Islands is aware, the arts mean jobs. They definitely mean investment and jobs in my riding of York East. What I want to ask you is, what other steps is the ministry taking to encourage the cultural industries in the province of Ontario?

Hon Isabel Bassett (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation): I want to thank my colleague and friend the member for York East for his question. First of all, if he was referring to the member for Kingston and The Islands, who knows very well you have the Etherington gallery in Kingston, which is outstanding and moving more and more towards that goal — all of us can travel all around Ontario —

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order. Could the member for Kingston and The Islands ask the member for Essex South to move, and you can go to your seat and heckle.

Hon Ms Bassett: One of the exciting things that has been announced by the Art Gallery of Ontario is the great acquisition from the Courtauld gallery in London, England, which will be coming here this summer. We in Toronto at the Art Gallery of Ontario will be the only venue in North America. We expect it to equal the revenues and full-time jobs over a long period of time that visitors at the Barnes exhibit brought in. In terms of outside tourism which will have a spinoff effect, it's going to be terrific.

In terms of other areas, we have given tax credits in film —

The Speaker: Supplementary.

Mr Parker: I am pleased that you are aware that the question I was driving at was with reference to the Courtauld exhibit particularly. But in a more general sense, what is the ministry currently doing to fulfil its mandate to promote arts throughout the province of Ontario? What is your ministry doing to be supportive of this particular very important lever of economic development?

Hon Ms Bassett: As the member for York East knows, we are not in the business of giving out grants, but what we are in the business of doing is finding corporate partners to support things, as other municipalities across North America have done. There are all sorts of sponsors out there who are just looking for the right fit, and we're out there getting the right fit, as they did with Gluskin Sheff and the Barnes in the era of the opposition members across. I see the the member for Beaches-Woodbine nodding in acknowledgement. We are finding the right fit with the private sector to help us to finance job-creating, tourist-attracting artistic venues. That is one of the things we're doing.

1430

MAGNETIC RESONANCE IMAGING

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): My question is to the Minister of Health. As you're aware, in Hamilton-Wentworth we have a waiting list of in some cases up to eight months for MRIs. Your restructuring commission, when they came into Hamilton and recommended a number of hospital closures, was absolutely silent on MRIs and made no reference to any future funding proposal for that.

I have a case of a six-year-old girl who as a result of severe headaches had a CAT scan and then was referred for an MRI. Her parents took her to Buffalo, New York, to get the MRI done immediately. OHIP then denied the reimbursement of funds for that. Let me quote from the letter from the appeal board. It says the general manager of OHIP has denied the request, submitting that the service is available in Ontario in a timely fashion.

Minister, can you outline to the House what would be considered a timely fashion for an MRI for a six-year-old girl who's suffering from severe headaches and whose parents obviously are scared, are concerned, and want to get quick attention to her? What is a timely fashion for a six-year-old girl getting an MRI in Ontario under your government?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health): Obviously, if you have a situation which you would bring to my attention, I would be pleased to follow up.

Mr Agostino: Minister, again, it's not necessarily just this specifically, but it's a belief that it's a timely fashion for MRIs. I'm trying to get you to explain to us what that timely fashion is.

As you know, in Hamilton we have a regional cancer centre which serves a catchment area of over two million people. We have a head trauma injury unit at the general hospital; it has a catchment area of over two million. These two facilities are the only two facilities that are regional centres that do not have MRIs. They serve over two million people.

A cancer patient with a brain tumour at the Henderson, in order to begin therapy, must be sent to Buffalo, New York, for an MRI before they can begin radiation therapy at the Henderson hospital. With a car accident injury, someone has to be sent to the General for assessment, then back to McMaster for an MRI, and then back to the Hamilton General Hospital for treatment.

It is unacceptable for a city the size of Hamilton, for a region that catches over two million people at these centres, not to have two more MRIs. Will you commit today to fund two additional MRIs to take care of the need at the cancer centre and at the general hospital in Hamilton?

Hon Mrs Witmer: Yes, the reason we are doing the restructuring and doing the reinvestment in this province when it comes to health is in order to respond to the needs of people throughout the province. I would just indicate to you that when it comes to these types of situations,

obviously these are clinical decisions, and these decisions are made by the medical community.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): My question is also to the Minister of Health. Last week you responded to a question in this House about the abrupt closure of two community mental health programs in Kingston. You promised to look into it and the ham-fisted way that your ministry handled it. More than 150 vulnerable people have been left in the lurch. There's no longer a crisis line or a drop-in centre in Kingston. These are services that the community has built and has come to depend upon, and yet you eliminated them in one thoughtless act.

There are a lot of important questions, not least of which is the long series of unanswered letters that went from the Kingston Clubhouse Activity Centre to the Ministry of Health on February 27, on March 26, on April 8, in October, on November 5: all attempts to get information and to offer to the ministry their expertise. They had no response to any of that correspondence. Suddenly on November 5, the ministry walks in, fires the staff and closes the centres. You promised an answer. What's the answer?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health): First of all, I think it's important that we understand that there has been absolutely no reduction in funding whatsoever that has been made. Also, it's important that we recognize that the present allocation is \$1.8 million that is being spent at the present time, and that is being allocated to the Kingston Friendship Homes.

However, in light of the information that has been brought to my attention, and as a result of my request for information, I would indicate to you at this time that we are quite prepared to take a look at how we can best meet the needs of those individuals in that community and work with the board in order to ensure that we can respond to those needs.

Mrs Boyd: Work with what board? What you did was close down two agencies that had been under some form of trusteeship by the agency to which you've given the dollars. The reality here is that they do not have either the staff or the capacity at this point in time to take up the services that have been abruptly halted. They can't do that overnight. So 150 people have been left in the lurch. It makes no difference whether you promised them the money; the services aren't there. This is a very difficult time of year for people who are living in the community who have mental health difficulties and are suddenly left without the services they helped to create. This was very much a consumer-created group, and it is no longer available to them.

Last night the city council in Kingston voted unanimously to petition your ministry to reinstate the program. What is your answer? Those 150 people are waiting for your answer today; they're not waiting months out in the future for some agency that hasn't given those services to suddenly have the capacity to do so.

Hon Mrs Witmer: In my last answer, I indicated to you that I was aware of the request that had been made by council. I also told you that there has been absolutely no reduction in funding. There is still \$1.8 million being provided. However, if the community has indicated there is a need for services to be provided in a different way, we are quite prepared to deal with it, and we are prepared to solve it right now.

HEALTH CARE FRAUD

Mr Jim Brown (Scarborough West): My question is also to the Minister of Health. This past fall the previous Minister of Health, Jim Wilson, announced a much-needed crackdown on health care fraud in Ontario. Those who act to defraud our health care system are stealing dollars from patients in need. They're stealing from the sick and the infirm. Minister, can you advise the House as to the status of our commitment to eliminating health care fraud.

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health): I'm pleased to indicate to you that the government is very, very strongly committed to zero tolerance for fraud. We believe that any dollars that are being spent on fraud unfortunately are not being spent to deal with patient needs. We have introduced a dedicated fraud line. We have also created a new investigation unit. We are following through with our commitment to make OHIP payments more accountable. We are going to ensure that payments are made for health services only to those claimants who are legitimate.

Mr Jim Brown: I know members of this House and all Ontarians will be pleased to hear of our ongoing commitment to the elimination of health care fraud. Can the minister also advise the House how the public can help in health fraud crackdown.

Hon Mrs Witmer: As I indicated, we are concentrating on zero tolerance for fraud. Starting tomorrow, there will be advertisements appearing in the major provincial dailies indicating that we believe, and the message will be, "Every dollar lost to health fraud is a dollar taken from a patient who needs it." There will be a telephone line as well where people can phone in legitimate concerns. We would also encourage all Ontarians to make sure that they have a valid health card number and that they share this information with their physician. We will continue to move forward to ensure all health dollars are spent on patient needs and not on fraudulent claims.

1440

COMMUNITY SERVICE ORDERS

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): My question is to the Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services. You know that the community service order program has operated successfully in this province for the last 20 years. They provided programs that offer supervision to offenders necessary to complete court-ordered hours. These non-profit organizations have developed effective

programs that actually reduce the cost of incarceration and promote public safety. Your decision to cut \$1.2 million from a relatively small budget of \$4 million is now becoming a threat to communities across Ontario.

In my community in Ottawa-Carleton, the CSO program of Ottawa-Carleton has been forced to close after 18 years of service. The impact in Ottawa will see approximately 400 offenders presently on CSOs left on their own without supervision, and 200 community agencies will be left without service and without support.

In a letter to you from the Hawthorne Meadows Nursery School, they said: "The new model for CSOs has eliminated screening of offenders and reduced supervision of offenders. These changes will effectively end our ability to provide placements."

Minister, will you review this in the light of everyone telling you that you need to have a strong program and it needs to be untouched.

Hon Robert W. Runciman (Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services): We have reviewed it with respect to the original proposal that was raised with the CSOs across the province, and I want to be clear that the funding has not been reduced to any community service order program. The changes are to take effect in the coming year. We have done significant consultation. We've amended our original proposal.

I think I have to remind this member and others that we have an obligation to the taxpayers of this province. We were faced with an extremely difficult financial situation when we assumed office, as he is well aware, and all of us in government have to find ways of operating and providing these services in a more efficient and effective way with fewer resources. We've accepted that challenge and we're looking to our partners to also accept that challenge.

Mr Patten: Minister, you know that this is probably one of your most cost-effective programs of any that you have in a \$1.1-billion budget. One program is already closed; six are planning to close, given their new budgets, in the next couple of months, so you're obviously mistaken when you say you are concerned about the community and the offenders who are in these programs. They will not be able to find their own placements.

Even your own probation officers can't handle the load. They wrote to you and said that they can't handle the extra workload that would be caused by the removal of this particular program. Judge Paul Belanger wrote to you stating that it's very important to continue this program.

It costs \$120 per day for an incarcerated offender; it costs \$1 a day for a supervised person in a community program. And you're telling me that this has something to do with being cost-effective? The executive director, William Sparks, said that in his opinion this is penny-wise and pound-foolish.

Will you review this program and make sure that it continues to exist and save you money?

Hon Mr Runciman: Certainly the program has worked well. I don't deny that it's a valuable program,

and we're certainly intent on seeing it continue to operate and those services be provided across the province.

We have had indications from I think six agencies to date that they're not going to continue and we'll be issuing an RFP in those areas to find a new service provider.

We think we've come up with a formula that is acceptable and will provide the necessary dollars. We have to work together. Certainly we believe in the program and if indeed we have to make changes, I'll assure you that we'll review that. But we are quite confident, given the new formula that we presented recently, that we can continue to provide the fine level of service right across this province that we have in the past.

TRANSFER OF PROVINCIAL HIGHWAYS

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): My question is to the Minister of Transportation. You would know that earlier last week I raised the question around the whole issue of your transferring highways on to municipalities. We learned again this week — it's not new news; we've been dealing with this for some time — that the province of Ontario — you, the Minister of Transportation — wants to transfer Highway 67 to the city of Timmins and Iroquois Falls.

There's a little problem here. Highway 67 is a provincial highway. It's not a municipal highway. It connects Highway 101 on the west side and, on the east side, Highway 11, which is the Trans-Canada highway.

Minister, we, the citizens of Timmins and Iroquois Falls, along with the rest of the members of the assembly, would like to know, what do you consider to be not of provincial significance in this policy that allows the highways to transfer?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Transportation): What I can tell the honourable member and the members of the House is that our policy is to focus our attention on those highways that serve primarily a provincial interest in terms of inter-provincial or provincial transport and in terms of their importance to the web of provincial highways that are involved in more than local transport. That is determined by traffic volumes as well as destinations.

What I can also tell the House is that the reference by the honourable member is to 21.8 kilometres of highway in Highway 67; 11.9 kilometres will be going to Iroquois Falls, 9.9 to Timmins. I'm quite convinced that those local municipalities have the wherewithal and indeed know better about the uses and the needs of that piece of road than the provincial government does.

Mr Bisson: Minister, you don't seem to get it. The city of Timmins and Iroquois Falls got together and they did a traffic study. Do you know what it said? Only 10% of the traffic is of municipal significance; the rest of it is provincial traffic. It is people who are travelling through Ontario while they do commerce or travel within the province.

I have to ask you again, why are you transferring to the city of Timmins and to the city of Iroquois Falls? Mayor Graham is ready to come down here and meet with you.

Mayor Power is here today to meet with the Minister of Northern Development and Mines about this exact issue. Why is it that you're transferring a provincial highway in which municipalities have no interest on to municipalities?

Hon Mr Clement: I don't know the study to which the honourable member is referring. I can tell the House that our own transport ministry has done a study and I stand by that study. I can also tell the House that there has been a one-time unconditional payment of \$196,000 to Iroquois Falls and of over \$1.185 million to Timmins so that they can deal with the road. I can also tell the city of Timmins that they will control the land use for that road, the zoning along that route. They can issue and control entrance and building permits. This is a big win, I believe, for the taxpayers of Ontario and for the city of Timmins and for the municipality of Iroquois Falls.

MOTORCYCLE GANGS

Mr Toby Barrett (Norfolk): I wish to question the Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services with respect to motorcycle gangs engaged in criminal activity. In the past month there have been a number of reports of increased activity by these bike gangs in Ontario. Reports have come in from all over the province: Niagara Falls, Toronto, Sudbury and Port Dover in my riding.

People are concerned about potential turf wars and violence as experienced in Quebec. It is well known the gangs are also heavily involved in drug trafficking and other organized crimes. Minister, can you tell the people of my riding and the people of Ontario what our government is doing to combat lawless behaviour of bikers?

Hon Robert W. Runciman (Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services): I want to thank the member for Norfolk for his question. I want to assure him that the government is committed to a sustained law enforcement campaign against organized crime in this province and there's evidence that getting tough with organized crime and outlaw motorcycle gangs is having an impact.

There are charges laid in a number of cases. I can't go into great detail, but I can say that on Monday of this week the OPP, as part of a joint forces operation called Project Dismantle involving a number of police services, charged six people with a total of 37 charges related to the bombing of the Sudbury Regional Police station last year. In addition to these charges, since last May Project Dismantle has laid almost 1,200 more charges, the majority of them drug-related. Over \$1 million in drugs and two marijuana labs with a potential annual yield of over \$13 million have been shut down.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Answer, please.

Hon Mr Runciman: The police have also seized 51 handguns, three machine guns, six sawed-off shotguns, 11 rifles, five stun guns, brass knuckles, knives and other weapons. Clearly, biker gangs are getting the message —

The Speaker: Thank you. Appreciate that response.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): I would like to take the opportunity to direct you to the Speaker's gallery to introduce Ms Anne Collins, Consul General of Canada in St Petersburg, Russia. Welcome.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

Mr Alex Cullen (Ottawa West): Pursuant to standing order 37(a), I wish to advise you of my dissatisfaction with the response of the Minister of Health referring to the Minister without Portfolio responsible for seniors with respect to my question earlier today.

The Speaker: File the appropriate papers.

PETITIONS

CHIROPRACTIC HEALTH CARE

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): To the Ontario Legislature:

"Whereas the Ministry of Health has recently strengthened its reputation as the Ministry of Medicine through its \$1.7-billion three-year agreement with the Ontario Medical Association; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government is restricting access to alternative cost-saving treatments for patients of the province; and

"Whereas two recent reports commissioned by the Ministry of Health called for increased OHIP funding to improve patient access to chiropractic services on the grounds of safety, effectiveness and cost-effectiveness; and

"Whereas over one million Ontario adults now use chiropractic services annually, increasingly those with higher incomes, because of the cost barrier caused by government underfunding; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government has shown blatant disregard for the needs of the citizens of Ontario in restricting funding for chiropractic services;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to recognize the contribution made by chiropractors to the good health of the people of Ontario, to recognize the taxpayer dollars saved by the use of low-cost preventive care such as that provided by chiropractors and to recognize that to restrict funding for chiropractic health care only serves to limit access to a needed health care service."

I have signed my name to that petition.

1450

IPPERWASH PROVINCIAL PARK

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): This is a petition concerning the killing of Dudley George at Ipperwash park in September 1995, and it reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas first nations demonstrators assembled at Ipperwash Provincial Park on September 4, 1995, to express legitimate and long-standing grievances and were asserting their constitutional, aboriginal, treaty and other civil and human rights; and

"Whereas the massive and deadly use of force by the government of Ontario and the Ontario Provincial Police against a small number of unarmed first nations demonstrators resulted in the killing of Dudley George and the beating and shooting of a number of other demonstrators;

"We, the undersigned, call on the government of Ontario to immediately call a public judicial inquiry into the killing of Dudley George and all other aspects of these tragic events."

This has been signed by some 400 individuals, and I have affixed my signature as well.

PAY EQUITY

Mr Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): I have a petition to the Parliament of Ontario and it reads:

"We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

"We urge the three party leaders to come together to discuss the issue of pay equity as it affects the Red Cross homemakers and the 73,000 clients."

I have affixed my signature as required.

EDUCATION REFORM

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew North): I have petitions signed by hundreds of my constituents in the Ottawa Valley, all of which petitions call for the repeal or the withdrawal of Bill 160.

CANADIAN VIETNAM VETERANS

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): I have a petition here addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Canadian Vietnam Veterans National Memorial Committee, a body created of Canadian citizens who served as Canadians in the American armed forces and fought in the Vietnam War, is building a memorial and is presently seeking land to erect a memorial in Ottawa;

"Whereas honourable Canadians believed that the principle of freedom was at stake and gave their lives fighting for freedom in a foreign land. The United States and Canada share a long history of friendship with one another throughout the period. Canadians and citizens of the United States have repeatedly shown their strong commitment to each other during times of war;

"Whereas the memorial will be a fitting tribute to these courageous Canadian men and women who sacrificed their lives serving as members of the United States armed forces in southeast Asia;

"The pain that is felt at the loss of lives in war may be eased by the knowledge that the deeds of those taken from us are not to be forgotten;

"For the devotion exhibited while in military service, each person whose name appears on the memorial deserves nothing less than our respect and admiration;

"Wherefore, the undersigned, your petitioners, call upon the government of Ontario to provide a suitable land site in the nation's capital."

I'm pleased to add my signature to the list.

MALDEN PARK CONTINUING CARE CENTRE

Mrs Sandra Papatello (Windsor-Sandwich): This is a petition to the Legislature of Ontario.

"Whereas it took 20 years and \$10 million in local donations to create a 225-bed chronic facility known as Malden Park; and

"Whereas this community believed that its donations were going towards the creation of a new chronic care hospital; and

"Whereas the Health Services Restructuring Commission recommends putting chronic care beds in Windsor Western Hospital, at a cost of \$14 million to \$25 million; and

"Whereas the funding levels for Malden Park have been deteriorating over the past two years;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to restore funding levels to Malden Park to the average per day rate for chronic care and designate Malden Park as a complex continuing care facility, which is what this community raised \$10 million for, and to save the \$14-million cost required to refurbish Windsor Western as a chronic care facility."

I affix my signature.

BEAR HUNTING

Mr Harry Danford (Hastings-Peterborough): I have a petition, which reads:

"We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ontario government protect our hunting heritage and continue to support all current forms of black bear hunting."

I affix my signature as well.

EDUCATION REFORM

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): I have a petition of non-confidence.

"Whereas the government of Ontario has not listened to the public with respect to Bill 160; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario has chosen to overtly deceive the people of Ontario as to the true objectives of Bill 160; and

"Whereas we, the people, believe that no government has a mandate to act in isolation of the wishes of the

electorate of this province and we have lost confidence in this government,

"We, the undersigned electors of Ontario, petition the Lieutenant Governor to dissolve the Legislature and call a general election forthwith."

COURT DECISION

Mr Toby Barrett (Norfolk): "We, the undersigned, request that the government of Canada be petitioned to take appropriate action to amend the Criminal Code to clearly establish and define conduct which is criminal and clarify acceptable community standards within our society so as to prohibit female toplessness in public places."

I sign this petition.

EDUCATION REFORM

Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming): I have two different petitions that both protest the government's passing of Bill 160, and I will affix my signature to this.

GOVERNMENT LEGISLATION

Mrs Helen Johns (Huron): I have two petitions in my hand, one from Wingham calling for the withdrawal of 160, and one with 16 signatures calling for the withdrawal of Bill 142.

EDUCATION REFORM

Mr Alex Cullen (Ottawa West): "Whereas the Ontario government wants to take up to an additional \$1 billion out of the education system this year and every year; and

"Whereas the Ontario government will remove up to 10,000 teachers from the classrooms across the province; and

"Whereas the Ontario government will have unbridled regulatory powers over public education; and

"Whereas the Ontario government wishes to remove the right to negotiate student learning conditions; and

"Whereas the Ontario government proposes to undermine shared decision-making among students, parents, educators, trustees and taxpayers;

"We, the undersigned Ontario residents, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to withdraw Bill 160."

I affix my signature to it.

COURT DECISION

Mr Tim Hudak (Niagara South): I have a petition signed from the Stevensville Brethren in Christ church urging the federal government to enact legislation to ban going topless in public places, and I affix my signature in support.

CHIROPRACTIC HEALTH CARE

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): I have a petition to the Legislature of Ontario. I will just read the final lines.

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to recognize the contribution made by chiropractors to the good health of the people of Ontario, to recognize the taxpayer dollars saved by the use of low-cost preventive care such as that provided by chiropractors and to recognize that to restrict funding for chiropractic health care only serves to limit access to a needed health care service."

I affix my signature.

EDUCATION REFORM

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): It's a pleasure to rise today to read into the record a petition that was presented to me from the teachers of Waverley public school.

"We, the undersigned members of the staff of Waverley public school in your riding of Durham East, wish to remind you of our continued opposition to Bill 160. The reasons for this were clearly communicated to you and your government through our federation over the course of the last several weeks.

"We remind you that you are elected by the people of this riding, who have made clear statements to you by supporting teachers during the job protest. The protest organized by parents, the constant outpouring of public support for teachers on the picket line by the community and the reports in the respected media, as well as letters and phone calls, cannot be ignored.

"We have never before seen such a high degree of public awareness of a piece of proposed legislation as we have during our job action during Bill 160. This awareness has resulted in alarm concerning the negative impact of the bill on the future of our educational system and has exposed your misnamed legislation, which will neither promote quality nor improve the system. You have a responsibility to listen to our constituents and reflect their concerns."

I am aware that I am running out of time, but I am pleased to present this petition to the House.

IPPERWASH PROVINCIAL PARK

Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming): "Whereas many questions concerning the events preceding, during and after the fatal shooting of Anthony Dudley George on September 6, 1995, at Ipperwash Provincial Park, where over 200 armed officers were sent to control 25 unarmed men and women have not been answered;

"Whereas the officers involved in the beating of Bernard George were not held responsible for their actions;

"Whereas the Ontario Provincial Police refused to co-operate with the special investigations unit in recording the details that night;

"Whereas the influence and communications of Lambton MPP Marcel Beaubien with the government have been verified through transcripts presented in the Legislature;

"Whereas the promised return of Camp Ipperwash to the Stony Point Nation by the federal Ministry of Defence and the serious negotiations of land claims by both the provincial and federal governments could have avoided a conflict;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that a full public inquiry be held into the events surrounding the fatal shooting of Dudley George on September 6, 1995, to eliminate all misconceptions held by and about the government, the OPP and the Stony Point people."

I affix my signature to this.

1500

CERTIFIED GENERAL ACCOUNTANTS

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean): I have a petition submitted by Sharon Nitschke of the Certified General Accountants Association of Ontario and supported by Ivan Guertin, which reads as follows:

"A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas it is in the best interests of the public to have open market competition among professional accountants; and

"Whereas, under the Public Accountancy Act, only chartered accountants have full access to public accounting licences in the province of Ontario; and

"Whereas the province of Ontario restricts certified general accountants more than all other provinces, with the exception of Prince Edward Island; and

"Whereas certified general accountants, whose training is identical to that of certified general accountants in the province of Ontario, have a statutory right to practise public accounting in the provinces of Alberta, British Columbia, New Brunswick and Newfoundland, are free to practise in the provinces of Saskatchewan and Manitoba, can be licensed to practise in Nova Scotia and have considerable public accountancy rights in the province of Quebec; and

"Whereas this has created a monopoly in the province of Ontario since 1962 that is not only unfair to the public but also results in additional expenses, particularly to small business owners; and

"Whereas the monopoly results in NAFTA inequities for certified general accountants in the province of Ontario; and

"Whereas according full professional rights to certified general accountants would lower costs to businesses by creating competition in accounting and auditing services, which is consistent with the current government's initiative to introduce measures designed to reduce government

interference in the private and business lives of Ontario residents; and

"Whereas certified general accountants in the province of Ontario are qualified professionals whose governing body delivers a rigorous and demanding program of professional studies, examines for professional competency, requires practical experience to qualify individuals as certified general accountants, has an established code of ethics and rules of professional conduct and an accompanying disciplinary process to ensure that all standards of the profession are maintained and that the interests of the public are protected; and

"Whereas the Professional Organizations Committee rejected the notion of a monopoly over licensed practices for chartered accountants and specifically supported and recommended the extension of public accounting licences to certified general accountants with experience in the field of public accounting;

"We, the undersigned residents of the province of Ontario, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to grant the Certified General Accountants Association of Ontario their request for overdue amendments to the Public Accountancy Act to allow certified general accountants full access to public practice licences and to eliminate the present monopoly."

RÉFORME DU SYSTÈME D'ÉDUCATION

Mr Mario Sergio (Yorkview): I have received another petition in French. I would like to read it to the House.

«Attendu que le gouvernement de l'Ontario est demeuré indifférent aux protestations du public sur le projet de loi 160 ; et

«Attendu que le gouvernement de l'Ontario a choisi de duper la population ontarienne en camouflant les objectifs réels du projet de loi 160 ; et

«Attendu que nous, les citoyens et les citoyennes de l'Ontario, croyons qu'aucun gouvernement n'a le droit d'agir contrairement aux désirs de l'électorat de cette province ; et

«Attendu que nous avons perdu confiance en ce gouvernement ;

«Nous, les soussignés électrices et électeurs de l'Ontario, demandons par cette pétition à la lieutenant-gouverneure de dissoudre la présente Législature et de déclencher une élection générale immédiatement.»

I do agree and I will affix my signature to it.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE REFORM

Mr Gary L. Leadston (Kitchener-Wilmot): I have a petition addressed to the Premier and to the honourable Minister of Community and Social Services and members of the Ontario Legislature.

"Whereas the gap between the rich and poor in Canadian society continues to widen; and

"Whereas Bill 142 continues the favouring of the strong while weakening supports for the vulnerable; and

"Whereas the punitive measures of Bill 142 will continue the cycle of poverty in the families of the poor;

"Therefore, be it resolved that the undersigned petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to withdraw Bill 142 immediately."

BEAR HUNTING

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): I have a petition to the Parliament of Ontario.

"Whereas black bear populations in Ontario are healthy with between 75,000 and 100,000 animals and their numbers are stable or increasing in many areas of the province; and

"Whereas black bear hunting is enjoyed by over 20,000 hunters annually in Ontario and black bears are a well-managed renewable resource; and

"Whereas hunting regulations are based on sustained yield principles and all forms of hunting are needed to optimize the socioeconomic benefits associated with hunting; and

"Whereas the value of the spring bear hunt to tourist operators in northern Ontario is \$30 million annually, generating about 500 person-years of employment; and

"Whereas animal rights activists have launched a campaign of misinformation and emotional rhetoric to ban bear hunting and to end our hunting heritage in Ontario, ignoring the enormous impact this would have on the people of Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ontario government protect our hunting heritage and continue to support all current forms of black bear hunting."

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT PROCESS SIMPLIFICATION ACT

(MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AND
COMMERCIAL RELATIONS), 1996

LOI DE 1996 VISANT À SIMPLIFIER
LES PROCESSUS GOUVERNEMENTAUX
AU MINISTÈRE DE LA CONSOMMATION
ET DU COMMERCE

Mr Sterling, on behalf of Mr Tsubouchi, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 64, An Act to simplify government processes and to improve efficiency in the Ministry of Consumer and Commercial Relations / Projet de loi 64, Loi visant à simplifier les processus gouvernementaux et à améliorer l'efficacité au ministère de la Consommation et du Commerce.

GOVERNMENT PROCESS
SIMPLIFICATION ACT
(MINISTRY OF ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT,
TRADE AND TOURISM), 1996

LOI DE 1996
VISANT À SIMPLIFIER LES PROCESSUS
GOUVERNEMENTAUX AU MINISTÈRE DU
DÉVELOPPEMENT ÉCONOMIQUE,
DU COMMERCE ET DU TOURISME

Mr Sterling, on behalf of Mr Palladini, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 65, An Act to simplify government processes and to improve efficiency in the Ministry of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism / Projet de loi 65, Loi visant à simplifier les processus gouvernementaux et à améliorer l'efficacité au ministère du Développement économique, du Commerce et du Tourisme.

GOVERNMENT PROCESS
SIMPLIFICATION ACT
(MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT
AND ENERGY), 1996

LOI DE 1996 VISANT À SIMPLIFIER
LES PROCESSUS GOUVERNEMENTAUX
AU MINISTÈRE DE L'ENVIRONNEMENT
ET DE L'ÉNERGIE

Mr Sterling moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 66, An Act to simplify government processes and to improve efficiency in the Ministry of Environment and Energy / Projet de loi 66, Loi visant à simplifier les processus gouvernementaux et à améliorer l'efficacité au ministère de l'Environnement et de l'Énergie.

GOVERNMENT PROCESS
SIMPLIFICATION ACT
(MINISTRY OF NORTHERN
DEVELOPMENT
AND MINES), 1996

LOI DE 1996 VISANT À SIMPLIFIER
LES PROCESSUS GOUVERNEMENTAUX
AU MINISTÈRE DU DÉVELOPPEMENT
DU NORD ET DES MINES

Mr Sterling, on behalf of Mr Hodgson, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 68, An Act to simplify government processes and to improve efficiency in the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines / Projet de loi 68, Loi visant à simplifier les processus gouvernementaux et à améliorer l'efficacité au ministère du Développement du Nord et des Mines.

GOVERNMENT PROCESS
SIMPLIFICATION ACT
(MINISTRIES OF
THE SOLICITOR GENERAL
AND CORRECTIONAL SERVICES), 1996

LOI DE 1996 VISANT À SIMPLIFIER
LES PROCESSUS GOUVERNEMENTAUX
AUX MINISTÈRES
DU SOLICITEUR GÉNÉRAL
ET DES SERVICES CORRECTIONNELS

Mr Sterling, on behalf of Mr Runciman, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 69, An Act to simplify government processes and to improve efficiency in the Ministry of the Solicitor General and the Ministry of Correctional Services / Projet de loi 69, Loi visant à simplifier les processus gouvernementaux et à améliorer l'efficacité au ministère du Solliciteur général et au ministère des Services correctionnels.

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): I'd like at the outset to ask for unanimous consent to share the time. I believe it's a limited debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Is there unanimous consent? Agreed.

Hon Mr Sterling: I will be sharing my time with the member for Dufferin-Peel, the member for Hamilton West and the member for Etobicoke-Rexdale. I have already spoken in the time allocation motion on this, and I would yield the floor to the member for Dufferin-Peel.

Mr David Tilson (Dufferin-Peel): This is the third reading debate on a number of bills, as have been read by the Clerk and introduced by the government House leader and which of course are set forth in the orders and notices of today and which are known more commonly as the red tape bills, or some of the red tape bills. I think there are five of them from five different ministries.

As you know, this government has been doing a number of things trying to put the Ontario economy back in order again. One of those things has been making attempts to eliminate the deficit, and of course we heard from the Minister of Finance this week indicating how that deficit has been reduced and we are on track to eliminate the deficit by the end of our mandate, by the year 2000.

The other issue of course that is part of the overall economic package has been that of reducing high taxes. Of course, we have been monitoring our commitments with respect to that proposal as well. Provincial income taxes have been reduced, and there will be a further reduction on the 1st day of 1998.

The other part of the package is that we have felt there have been unfair labour laws, and we have introduced a number of bills to provide a better economic climate in this province to encourage investment from other parts of the world, other parts of the country, to encourage small business to develop in our economy again and to make it easier, which leads to the whole purpose of these bills

before the House today for third reading called the red tape bills.

This province, I think we will all agree, over time has literally been sinking in paper, sinking in regulations. Mr Sheehan, the member for Lincoln, I believe has spent hours and hours with other members of the government caucus trying to put forward a proposal to reduce the red tape and the regulations around this province. I'm looking for the names of some of those members. I know it was chaired by the member for Lincoln, who has done an admirable job in coming to the position that we are in now. This Red Tape Review Commission, which was chaired by the member for Lincoln, did put out a report which was tabled in January 1997. It was called Cutting the Red Tape Barriers to Jobs and Better Government. If members haven't read this report, I have the executive summary, and even reading that would be useful to show why the government believes that cutting red tape and making it easier to do business in the province is simply mandatory. We are attempting to do just that.

1510

This final report that was put out by the commission talks about how the Fraser Institute estimated that government rules and regulations cost the Canadian economy in 1993-94 \$85.7 billion. That's across the country, mind you. In a Canadian Federation of Independent Business survey, 70% of Ontario members described government regulation and paperwork as significant problems. A Carr-Gordon research survey of 500 Ontario businesses found the regulatory burden accounted for an average 7% of a company's operating costs. The same survey found that 71% of Ontario businesses would be more likely to invest here if red tape was reduced.

This series of bills which are put out by the Ministry of Consumer and Commercial Relations, the Ministry of Economic Development, the Ministry of Environment and Energy, the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines and the Solicitor General are prepared strictly for the purposes of eliminating red tape and trying to make it easier to do that. I'm not going to cover all of these bills. I will spend some time with some of them.

One in particular is Bill 69, which is one of the five bills before us. That is a bill of the Solicitor General and Ministry of Correctional Services. It's called An Act to simplify government processes and to improve efficiency in the Ministry of the Solicitor General and the Ministry of Correctional Services. That bill amends five statutes that are currently administered by this minister. These amendments have been set forth in other debates in this House, and for clarification I would like to set forth what some of these amendments are.

The purpose of these amendments is to simplify government processes and improve efficiency in a number of areas. This bill, like a lot of other bills, is in my estimation considered housekeeping in that it removes red tape from routine actions of the ministry. I don't really believe it will be contentious with respect to the opposition — at least I hope it won't be contentious — because I think they will see that it is trying to make life a little bit easier in

doing business in the province of Ontario. I'm going to run down what some of these bills are.

There's the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, just as an example. It sounds monotonous, but just imagine what it's like for the people who have to deal with these things. Two court forms currently set out in the act are repealed and will be completed through ministerial regulations instead.

In the Ministry of Correctional Services Act, Bill 69 eliminates the need for a warrant to transfer inmates from one correctional institution to another. Under this bill, ministerial regulations will be able to prescribe the form of a warrant to arrest a parolee who has violated their parole functions, instead of that being done by an order in council as it is now, by the Lieutenant Governor in Council.

Under this bill, the minister is also given the power to require other fees and forms without a regulation, which is what it is now, which means more paperwork and quite frankly more administration and more time consumption.

As to the Coroners Act, Bill 69, the bill before us today, allows a form summons to a witness before an inquest and a bench warrant form to now be prescribed via regulation. The bill also allows for creating forms and the setting of fees and allowances payable to persons who provide services to coroners to be done by the minister's regulation instead of by the Lieutenant Governor in Council.

Finally, there's the Anatomy Act. The bill allows various forms previously in legislation to be specified by the minister without regulation. It also provides one court form previously in legislation to be prescribed by regulation.

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I understand that it was important enough for the government to get these bills through that they did an omnibus time allocation motion, and yet there's no quorum when we're discussing them.

The Acting Speaker: Would you please check if we have a quorum.

Clerk Assistant (Ms Deborah Deller): Mr Speaker, a quorum is not present.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk Assistant: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Dufferin-Peel may continue.

Mr Tilson: The fifth bill that Bill 69 amends is the Private Investigators and Security Guards Act. The powers and duties currently given to the Ontario Provincial Police commissioner in the act are now transferred to the deputy minister or delegate. The private investigator and security guard licences are made to expire on the day set out on the licence itself and not on March 31 of each year, as is the case under the current act, which means they all fall due on the same date now as opposed to perhaps spread out throughout the year. Finally, under this bill, the minister may, without regulation, specify uniforms, badges, shields, insignia and identification cards to be used by security guards. The identification cards for

private investigators are also to be specified by the minister, and appropriate fees and forms may be set by the minister.

As you can see, these measures are, in my submission, routine and really could have been made a long time ago. These are typical of the types of changes that are made in the other four bills which we are debating. The measures in these bills will make the operation of the government of Ontario, the operation of doing business in the province of Ontario, more efficient, and hence will benefit everyone in Ontario.

Perhaps just to elaborate a little bit on the last act that I referred to that Bill 69 is amending, which is the Private Investigators and Security Guards Act, as I indicated, currently all licences that are granted under that particular piece of legislation today expire on March 31. This leads to a tremendous amount of paperwork and bureaucracy all at the same time of the year. The ministry is forced, because of the vast numbers of licences and applications it has to deal with, to bring in temporary workers to deal with it, just that one issue.

Bill 69 will allow for these licences to expire and to be renewed throughout the year, similar to automobile drivers' licences, which expire throughout the year. That of course has been in existence for some time, and temporary staff are not needed because it's spread out more evenly throughout the year. So this is really only common sense and will save the taxpayers money, and I believe will improve service to those involved in that particular piece of legislation.

1520

Another example of the way Bill 69 will assist the government to deliver services more efficiently is how it will help our correctional staff transfer inmates. Today, correctional staff must obtain what is known as a removal warrant in order to transfer an inmate from one jail to another. That's done about 22,000 times a year. Changes in technology will soon allow the ministry to transfer these sorts of documents electronically. Therefore, this change in the bill will enable the Ministry of Correctional Services to use technology this way. It amends the Ministry of Correctional Services Act.

Finally, Bill 69 is the result of the hard work of Mr Sheehan, the member for Lincoln, the various members of his committee and a large number of public servants of the government of Ontario, as well as other members of this House who have worked with the Red Tape Review Commission with one overriding goal in mind, and that is to remove obsolete regulations so that government can work better. I believe Bill 69 and the other bills, Bills 64 through 69, are doing just that.

We have discovered that red tape, as has been set out in the final report of the commission, hurts everyone. It hurts everyone who has anything to do with job creation in this province, which is what we're really trying to improve as far as the economy of this province is concerned. Red tape kills jobs by discouraging outside investment in Ontario. Quite frankly, if you asked anyone outside the province, up until some of these changes take place, "Would you do

business in Ontario? Would you invest in this province?" many of them would say no because of the overburdened regulation that our government has and the red tape that exists.

Red tape makes it more difficult and expensive for job-creating businesses to start up. Just ask anyone who starts up a small business in this province what you have to go through, what forms you have to fill out, what ministries you have to deal with, the number of copies of these forms, and it goes on and on. The member for Lincoln and his commission, with these and other bills, have hopefully alleviated that situation.

Red tape makes the government less efficient, creating additional costs, delays and service problems. Again, to do anything, any form of business with respect to the government of Ontario, at any of the ministries, because of the regulations that have been built up over the years — and I'm not being political, naming any one particular government. It goes back for many, many years. It has gradually built up through time and it was certainly time that we removed many of these regulations and this paperwork.

Finally, red tape impedes Ontario's economic growth and our ability to compete in the global economy.

In conclusion — and I do conclude because there are other members of the House and caucus who wish to speak in the time allowed today — red tape wastes valuable time and money for everyone in business, in the government and for the taxpayer. I would encourage all members of this House to support all of these five bills, which I believe are very straightforward and are, to use that time-worn expression, housekeeping bills, to remove the red tape and to make life a little easier with respect to doing business in Ontario. Thank you very much for your consideration.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate? The member for St Catharines.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): Unless the government has someone else they wish —

The Acting Speaker: The member for Hamilton West.

Mrs Lillian Ross (Hamilton West): Sorry, Mr Speaker. I thought we were going in rotation.

I am pleased to rise in support of the red tape bills that are under discussion today. When we were elected in 1995, as everyone knows, we promised to eliminate the deficit so that we could begin to tackle the debt so that our children didn't have to bear the horrendous burden of the debt that we face today.

Part of that eliminating of the deficit was to look at the paperwork that is distributed across the various ministries and through which businesses have found an undue burden in doing the business that they do. What we planned to do was to reduce the red tape, to break down the barriers to jobs and economic growth.

Research has proved that government red tape and paper burden are significant barriers to job creation. As a matter of fact, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business showed that 43% of firms spend more than six hours a week on government paperwork and 17% spend more than 10 hours per week. That's a lot of time, energy

and money that businesses spend on fulfilling government requirements to fill out a lot of paperwork. It's a very significant amount of dollars, dollars that could be better spent in creating jobs.

I believe that getting rid of red tape and the paper burden can make the difference between profit and loss, between a new job or one less job. There's a lot of effort that goes into paperwork that really should be eliminated so that we can concentrate and so that businesses can concentrate their energies on creating jobs and helping the economy grow and prosper.

The Red Tape Review Commission was set up by the Premier in 1995 under the leadership of the member for Lincoln, Mr Sheehan. It was originally given a one-year mandate so they could look at all the paperwork that was distributed through the various ministries to businesses and look at a goal of reducing that paperwork. I am sure you can appreciate, when you look at the paperwork that's distributed through the numerous ministries, that the amount of paperwork is pretty significant. Just going through the bureaucracies alone is a heavy task, let alone looking at the paperwork involved in each one of those ministries.

The Red Tape Review Commission has already identified 132 specific recommendations, including the repeal of 45 acts and the amendment of another 181. Already they've gone through a significant amount of elimination of that paperwork that is so desperately needed throughout the ministries.

The commission is now looking forward to its next phase. The Premier felt the amount of paperwork they were reducing was so significant that it needed to have another go at it so they could see what else they could do to eliminate further red tape. They are now embarking on their next phase. The key recommendations of the Red Tape Review Commission's report show that the government has relied on them to continue their efforts so their one-year mandate has been extended and they can pick up where they left off and try to eliminate further red tape.

I know in my riding of Hamilton-West, I am fortunate enough to have both McMaster University and Mohawk College in my riding. They have both indicated to me that there's a significant amount of red tape and paperwork that they go through just to satisfy the various ministries in government. We've made a commitment to sit down with them, and Mr Sheehan will sit down with them through the Red Tape Commission, to talk about what they can do at the post-secondary level, both at the colleges and at the universities, to reduce the red tape that is involved through the services they supply so they can get on with what they do best, which is provide education to our young people.

As the previous speaker has mentioned, the bills that we're talking about include Bill 64, which is the Government Process Simplification Act for the Ministry of Consumer and Commercial Relations. This particular bill amends three acts which are administered by the Ministry of Consumer and Commercial Relations: the Consumer Protection Act, the Motor Vehicle Dealers Act and the Motor Vehicle Repair Act.

Most of the red tape amendments that are brought forward are pretty much housekeeping: Bills 64, 65, 66, 68, and 69 as well, which is the one the previous speaker just talked about.

Most of them really look at a lot of the housekeeping things we should have done a long time ago. When you look at some of this stuff you sometimes wonder how the heck we continued enforcing all this paperwork on some of our businesses out there. We should have made these changes a long time ago. It would have made things a lot easier and perhaps created jobs a lot sooner and turned our economy around a lot quicker.

1530

I know that, for example, under the Motor Vehicle Repair Act, "The bill deletes the power to make regulations under the act with respect to the size, form and style of signs that a repairer is required to post for prospective customers." That is a pretty onerous requirement. A lot of that, size and signs and that sort of thing, is a municipal requirement and the municipalities enforce those kinds of things in their municipalities anyway.

A lot of the things we do here should have been amended a long time ago and red tape should have been reduced quite a bit sooner than it has been.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): Didn't Bill Davis bring in all these regulations?

Mrs Ross: I know Bill 69 amends five statutes that are currently administered by the Ministry of the Solicitor General and Correctional Services. That bill particularly looks at the Anatomy Act, the Coroners Act, the Ministry of Correctional Services Act, the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act and the Private Investigators and Security Guards Act. There are a lot of things in there. If you look at them, sometimes you just shake your head and you wonder, "Why the heck are we requiring people to do those things?"

In my discussions with Dr Peter George at McMaster University, he has also said the very same thing. He's looking forward to the discussions he'll have with the member for Lincoln and with the Red Tape Commission so they can sit down and really get down to the nuts and bolts of what they should be doing and why all this paperwork is necessary to be looked at. They can look at getting rid of a lot of it and reducing the time, energy and dollars they spend at their place of business so they can spend them better in other ways.

I very much support these bills and I am looking forward to the further elimination of red tape, which the member for Lincoln and his Red Tape Commission will be looking at. I very much support these bills and I hope all members of the House will support them.

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke-Rexdale): Actually, Bill Davis brought in some of these regulations on an orderly basis. What has arisen over the last number of years, probably 15, is that there has been no real evaluation of which particular regulations are useful in terms of honouring or affirming principles of safety for the public, environmental protection for the public, public health and safety and occupational health and safety.

What has actually happened over the years is that when a group of people was adversely affected in whatever area, they usually ran to the government and ended up getting some kind of bill through — we won't name any specific ministry, political party or what have you. But the result at the end of the day was that you had a specific bill, a set of regulations, some interpretations that were conflicting regarding the regulations when the bureaucracy were the folks who had to carry out and implement the regulations from the Legislature, and you ended up doing this time and time again, until the Red Tape Review Commission started up in I guess late December 1995 to look at the accumulation — that's a key word I'd like to press on members here — an accumulation, thickets of red tape and it was difficult to figure out: "What regulations under which acts are the most useful, relevant and protective of the public safety in a whole set of areas? What are the regulations that have become irrelevant, duplicative, self-cancelling and really serve only to create possibly conflicting interpretations?"

Let me give you an example. Look at the whole area of the Ministry of Health, which isn't touched on in these bills but is illustrative of what is happening at other levels of government in terms of protecting the public that perhaps at the same time have created layers of overlap and duplication. Look at the drug industry, pharmaceutical or generic, in Canada. You have the food and drug directorate in Ottawa, which sets out a whole set of requirements, protocols, mandates before any new drug can be introduced to the marketplace. Research and development costs and the whole set of requirements in terms of chemistry, in terms of the molecular structure, in terms of a whole set of issues of public safety have to be dealt with. The usual time frame for the introduction and approval of a new drug federally ranges from at least seven to 10 years. That used to be the general ambit of time. That has been brought down somewhat.

When you look at the Ministry of Health in Ontario, we have what is called the Drug Quality and Therapeutics Committee. Its role is to examine the drugs that were already tested for public safety, efficacy and all those things federally. They do the same sorts of things with new drugs in Ontario to qualify under the Ontario drug benefit program.

While I'm sure there is some value — but it's really hard to press on this issue — where's the value-added benefit of a group of people who are dedicated to doing what was done federally? Why is it necessary in every instance to duplicate, to have overlap when you have done it federally? So you have a constitutional situation in which two levels of government deal with an issue that surely could be done by one, get the job done and yet protect the public, get new drugs on to the market if they are useful in terms of expanding one's life, whether it be in cancer research, women's osteoporosis, all the diseases we have in modern society. But no, here's an example where we have two agencies doing somewhat similar work.

You'll find the same situation if you look at transportation across Canada. You've got regulatory regimes

for a whole set of issues in transportation. You have in many areas an accumulation of red tape where you have the ministries being the regulator and providing the service.

To be fair to the previous regime, there was to some extent set in motion by the interest groups, whether they would be in real estate, the travel industry or any other industry that would come under the ambit of the Ontario Ministry of Consumer and Commercial Relations, a movement to create a self-management model within the regulated environment we still have today honouring to protect public safety, protect the public interest, occupational health and safety, those sorts of matters. What has happened in the Ministry of Consumer and Commercial Relations is that you have had a movement out of a ministry in a number of areas under this government including amusement devices, elevating devices, stuffed articles.

All those sorts of activities are now placed into a group called the technical services corporation of Ontario. This is a group which is responsible for monitoring these industries. You have a situation where the regulated and the regulator are working together to protect the particular public interest, whether it be public safety, occupational health and safety, that sort of thing. Especially if you look at elevating devices, practically everybody uses those across Canada, in Ontario, in an urban or rural environment. You want to have that assured. On the other hand, we did have a thicket of red tape in many areas which had become questionable if it was not only duplicative of protecting these principles of public safety, the environment and so on, but repetitive and didn't really help in terms of producing results.

1540

I'm afraid to say that in many, many instances in government the emphasis of the whole regulatory regime has been on process: "Let's have a process to deal with a particular issue, but don't for once, or hardly ever at all, stress results. You don't want to know whether you're getting good results out of the way you handle things."

If you look at a whole series of areas, the responsibility of this government or the previous regimes, and you can see it reflected in questions in this Legislature, in areas such as birth registration, access to Ontario student loans, getting health cards, the issue comes down to — unfortunately, I think you will hear a different perspective on the other side — the fact that we should retain and build up the number of resources you have to deal with any backlogs in these areas. If you hire more people, you obviously will reduce the backlog, or ought to, but the reality is the more people you hire doesn't necessarily mean that your backlog is reduced if you do not accompany it by an investment in technology, whether it be computerization or automation, to deal with some of these issues.

I know members opposite are sensitive to pooh-poohing that kind of technology, because it reduces access by people to other human contact. A point of illustration is that my colleague the member for Grey-Owen Sound

introduced a resolution dealing with the whole use of voice mail and how many people are turned off by having to hear voice mail, when in fact it's a technology which can be useful in some instances. It sometimes is misused unfortunately.

What I want to get to here in terms of these bills is not only trying to reduce the duplication and overlap and repetition which the member for Dufferin-Peel mentioned in the Ministry of Correctional Services bill. Do you have to have a warrant every time you move an inmate from one institution to another if you can do it, serve the result of making sure that inmate doesn't escape from custody and get that inmate from provincial jail A to provincial jail B? It seems to me as politicians we're more interested at times in process than in results.

Another fine example of this —

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): And you are sure getting results on two hours' debate on six bills.

Mr Hastings: I know the member for Kingston and The Islands is constantly obsessed about how these bills were introduced and who is responsible for the lateness etc, but let's look at the actual exercise of what the Red Tape Review Commission has produced in terms of coming to grips with some of this situation. While there's often a joking attitude over there — there certainly was last night and some other nights — that this isn't really that big an issue, I don't want to be unfair to them, but there's a little bit of a dismissive attitude about all the efforts we have made in these areas, even though the member for St Catharines has mentioned that he is in agreement with most of these red tape bills.

But one of the other problems we, as red tape commissioners, have found, whether it's the government or previous governments, is the culture in which government functions today, and that is, it does not have a really strong, really vigorous customer service ethic. If it is alive, it's rather lackadaisical: "I'll get to that when I get to it. We don't have the resources. We don't have the technology." There isn't a great urgency in dealing with front-line people, customers, whether it's a student loan application, birth registration, health card or what have you. The culture tends to emphasize a sort of slow, methodical — that person will get served when they get served. There's more of a rules-oriented attitude, unfortunately, by some of the civil servants than there is the other way.

That's a criticism, yes. There are good people in the public service who do try to be accommodating, but I think the culture overall is to a great extent not emphasizing the priority and need of customer service. If you go back and look at this issue, not from a red tape perspective but from previous administrations, if you go back to the Davis regime of 1981-85, there was a task force that dealt with customer service, trying to ensure access for people. On the other hand —

Mr Bradley: Good people.

Mr Gerretsen: Good people, excellent people. Gave city grants every year.

Mr Hastings: Yes, here we go again. "Good people," but when it comes to dealing with the issue, it'll be interesting to hear what specific, solid alternatives the opposition parties can offer to these bills. For example, the Ministry of Correctional Services bill, if it's not adequate, if it doesn't deal with a repetitive situation specifically dealing with the warrants and the transfer of inmates from one provincial institution to another, it would be interesting to hear how they would have handled this situation. Keep the existing arrangement? Reduce it by half? What is the specific alternative they are going to embrace on this? We haven't heard very much in that area. Do they agree with that specific provision? Is that something they would support if they were the government over here? I don't know.

I want to go back to the customer service task force that the Davis administration presented many years ago. It certainly illustrates, from at least 1981 through till now, that many, many governments, opposition parties and third parties tried to deal with this issue in terms of some of the things red tape has recommended, yet they never seemed to get implemented, or were only half implemented. It would be interesting to hear the critics point out what is the adequacy or inadequacy of the customer service recommendations on page 11 of the report that was issued last January, the first part of the report.

Mr Wildman: Give us the floor and you'll find out what we think.

Mr Hastings: What's the problem for the member for Algoma?

Mr Wildman: Give us the floor and we'll tell you.

Mr Hastings: You have it. I'd be interested in hearing whether we have managed to deal with some of these issues and which are the ones that still need to be dealt with.

Let me conclude by pointing out that the bills that the previous speakers have dealt with are to some extent housekeeping. They are reflective of duplication, repetitive activity, which I think will to some extent liberate public servants to get on with doing the job that a lot of them want to do, rather than being tied up with all kinds of paper. That is one of the overwhelming aspects that you find in the whole governmental regulation, rules-making activity of today. What criteria need to be set to ensure that you have the preservation of principles and yet at the same —

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. Time has expired. Further debate?

Mr Gerretsen: The member across just accused me of being obsessed with how these bills got here. Let me tell you, yes, I am obsessed. I am obsessed with the democratic process and the democratic system. Sir, ultimately, a society is judged by the way it rules or by the way it deals with its minorities, whether we're talking about minorities in people out there or whether we're talking about the elected minority in Parliament.

What I cannot understand is, if these red tape bills are really such a housekeeping measure, if they're really such a good measure to implement, why it has taken one year

and 13 days between second reading of these bills and third reading. Why wouldn't you have called them as the first item of business back in January of this year?

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order.

Mr Gerretsen: We did, after all, come back here about the third week of January. Why didn't you call them at that point in time? We could have implemented them and saved an awful lot of the red tape that you say these bills are going to prevent. So, yes, we are obsessed with the democratic process and the way in which we do things here.

I know of no other time in the history of this province when, in effect, six bills have been called at once as the result of a time allocation motion. Six bills have been called at once, without there being consent in the House, for a two-hour debate on all of the issues, which leaves you 40 minutes for each party to deal with five different bills. I know of no other time in the history of this province when a government has passed the kind of time allocation motion that the Speaker agreed with yesterday.

1550

Although I respect the Speaker, I think he's wrong in his decision, because basically what it will allow is that at some point in time in the future a government is going to come in with about two days to go in a particular session, take every bill that it has on the calendar and put them all into one giant time allocation motion and that will just be the end of it.

It is somewhat unfortunate that the people of Ontario weren't more awake at the switch back this past summer when these rule changes were brought into effect. It's also kind of interesting that it was only when Bill 160 was brought forward — and we all remember the chaos that created — that a lot of people in this province finally for the first time realized the rule changes that have been implemented, the rule changes that were implemented to silence the minority in order to get legislation through as quickly as possible.

Yes, we agree with the major content of these bills that are called here today. We believe that needless red tape ought to be taken out of the system, that the system should be improved. However, we should always be concerned that the environment and indeed the public interest of Ontarians are protected at all times. Sometimes, in the needless haste to get rid of red tape, safeguards that have been put into the different systems, regardless of what ministry we're talking about, have been put there in order to make sure that we weren't in too large a haste and thereby that the environment or the public interest of this province was somehow being affected.

Why haven't we seen these bills for the past year? If they are really of such necessity and since they knew that the opposition parties basically agreed with the contents of these bills, why weren't they called earlier?

What we've heard time after time in the last two or three weeks is that the opposition somehow has denied the government from calling these bills. We have consistently on a week-to-week basis at the House leaders' meetings

requested that these bills be called forward and that they be debated one at a time, given the due process that is due to them, and the government has refused to do so. Maybe it knew back then that somehow it was going to pass this or try to get this huge time allocation motion passed.

That's all I have to say about it. I'm very concerned about the process. I think it's time that the people of Ontario wake up about what's really happening in this House, that we the minority have the right to question the government on its day-to-day activities. That's the whole purpose of the minority. I think that process is important and the democratic process and the democratic institutions that we have here in Ontario are well worth protecting.

I will now refer it to my colleague from Yorkview.

Mr Mario Sergio (Yorkview): I'm delighted to take advantage of the few minutes that have been allocated to contribute on the subject matter.

Let me say to the Premier and the members of the House on the government side, especially the member from Etobicoke-Rexdale who spoke on behalf of the government, when he says we have to measure the success of our government because this is what we have done, they can measure the success of their government according to the benefits that they have afforded with the approval of every bill. Let me say that there aren't too many bills that have provided a positive result for the people of Ontario. You really have to measure the success of those bills, including these bills here, by the positive results and positive delivery that they have had on the people of Ontario.

We certainly cannot say we are streamlining or eliminating red tape by implementing voice mail. My goodness, if there is one thing that the people of Ontario expect, they expect some leftover service from a government that has been on a burning sensation, if you will, and cutting so that there is nothing left.

Let me tell you that there is quite a difference when you get voice mail on the other side and you get somebody to answer a question that really may be of importance to some constituents and stuff like that. There is nothing more annoying than spending hours on the phone trying to get through to some of the departments and you get voice mail. Is this what streamlining means? Is this what eliminating red tape means? I don't think so. I would ask any member on the government side if they can substantiate that indeed applying voice mail is providing better service to the people of Ontario. I don't think so.

Just one particular case in question: the family benefits program. What a disaster. What a mess. Is this what they are planning to do with all the other bills, creating chaos with all the other bills throughout every other department? I don't think this is the intent of the members on the government side. I don't think this is the intent of the government itself. But indeed they are succeeding in doing exactly that. Let's not try to confuse new technology with service, in response to the previous speaker.

Let me just say one thing now. When you say eliminating some of the red tape and duplication and stuff like that, we have said, on this particular side of the House and

the people of Metro especially, no to the amalgamation, no to a new city council composed of 57 members when 28 were suggested.

Do you know what this has brought upon us? For example, in my own case, representing my own riding, now I have to deal with six councillors, let alone the mayor. I ask the Premier and the Minister of Municipal Affairs how this is streamlining things, not only for the government, not only for myself in my own office, but for those people we have to represent? Every time I have to send out a letter about a particular problem in one of the three ridings, I have to send letters to two councillors. Why is that? Only because the government wanted that — not because they were trying to streamline matters to improve the system.

God knows how many times we have heard from members on the government side: "You know what? We have to make changes because no one knows who their councillor, who their representative, who their school trustee is." Can you imagine now, having two councillors and having community councils and stuff like that, how even more entangled the web is going to be and how more irresponsible this is going to become, let alone more expensive?

I didn't pay attention to the clock when I got up, so I think I'll terminate in about two more minutes. I get a sense I have two more minutes. Wow, what a great pleasure.

Thanks again to the government, because now our time here has been curtailed as well, itself another "improvement." There are so many other things I'd like to say and we don't get so many chances, really, to rise. Because they have larger numbers, I can sympathize with the members of the government, who also would like to get on their feet and show their constituents that they're addressing certain issues, but unfortunately, on this particular topic, this is not the way to improve the situation here.

Yes, the government has been ramming through bill after bill, right or wrong. For example, here today we have been presented with Bills 64, 65, 66, 68 and 69. It's not a question that they are unimportant bills, less important. They are all important bills because if they were not important, they wouldn't be necessary; they wouldn't be introduced in this House.

I have addressed some of my thoughts on the five bills. I will let my colleague now take over here and continue.

1600

Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming): I'd like to congratulate my colleague on those insightful remarks on these unprecedented pieces of legislation. As I think people know after watching the debate last night and I'm sure has been mentioned this afternoon, the government has consolidated in this case five of these red tape bills this afternoon together into one bill and wants to have them all passed after two hours of debate.

It's interesting to note that these bills were not introduced just at the last minute. These have been on the order paper since before the summer, in the spring session. Of course, the way this place works, the government can call

these bills at any time, but chose not to do so until the last minute, as we are out of here by midnight tomorrow at the latest for the Christmas recess. It wasn't really necessary for the government to do this, but it's very typical and consistent of this government to ram pieces of legislation down the throats of Ontarians.

In this case, we think it's important that these bills be debated, but by and large, we are in agreement with the reduction of the bureaucracy here, the red tape in dealing with these particular bills.

There are a couple that are of particular interest to myself. One, because it deals with my riding in northern Ontario and mining, this government has set out before us trying to eliminate a lot of the bureaucracy involved in the Mining Act, to try to streamline the processes for the people involved in this industry. I receive, from time to time, complaints from people in the mining industry that they find it very difficult to access the government officials to really find out what approvals they need.

Mr Bradley: Are there any left?

Mr Ramsay: As the member for St Catharines mentions — which is something I hope to be able to speak on maybe this evening when we get on to supply — he says that there's not any left, referring to the good men and women who work very hard on behalf of the people of Ontario in our public service. We have been particularly hard hit in northern Ontario. Unlike the more affluent areas of southern Ontario, we have depended upon that public sector employment in northern Ontario as a bit of an underpinning to our economy. It's probably difficult for somebody who may live in a more affluent area of southern Ontario to appreciate the vagaries of the northern economy, which is very much dependent upon resource demand.

As people would realize, we are in a period right now of very little resource demand, if you look at the prices of most major commodities that are produced in northern Ontario. Nickel, for instance, comes from Sudbury, the largest producer in the world, a big generator of the economy of this province, but centred in the north. That is down. Forestry: Because of the Asian financial collapse, housing starts in Japan and other Asian countries have tumbled and therefore our timber resources are not in demand, so prices have plummeted. These sorts of things make it very difficult in the north.

I thank the member for St Catharines for prompting me to this aside because these are some of the effects that this downsizing of the civil service has caused for us in the north. In trying to refine some of these pieces of red tape, part of that is too because there are no longer people there to manage a lot of the regulation we once had in place. We have a bureaucracy that is very much overworked and cannot even cope with a lot of the regulation we had in place.

We had it in place for a very good reason. It's interesting to note that when we go into an exercise like this — and I'm certainly not against an exercise of taking a look at rules and regulations that government has placed upon its citizenry. We should be examining that all the time and

looking at what we could change, what we could make easier, but one must remember these were placed here originally for a very good reason. There were always very good reasons why these rules and regulations were there in the first place. Yes, circumstances change and standards change and people's behaviour patterns change and therefore one has to modify our rules and regulations.

Mr Bradley: We have to watch for the wolf in sheep's clothing.

Mr Ramsay: No doubt about it. But we have to always be careful that we are vigilant as the people's representatives, that we do have a sufficient number of rules and regulations to protect the interests of Ontarians, not only the people of Ontario, but her natural resources. It's very important, and a lot of these regulations that have been in place and continue to be in place do that.

Another area of interest that I have in regard to these red tape bills regards a bill that the Solicitor General has put forward that will simplify some of the regulations involved in the Ministry of Correctional Services. As the Liberal critic at Queen's Park for the Solicitor General and correctional services, this is of particular interest to me. I think these changes are going to make the system more efficient.

For instance, there's a change to the Anatomy Act. A court order may now be applied for under the current legislation if there's a doubt as to whether a person is entitled to claim a deceased person's body. The form this court order takes will no longer be set out in the act; it will be prescribed by the minister by regulation. The way we designed so much of our legislation in the past was that even prescribing the way the form is laid out was in the legislation itself and not put aside to regulation, where it does not have to come before the House. The bureaucracy can update at any time, at its desire, to streamline a form and not have to come through the Legislature, which can be a cumbersome process. It takes many of these menial jobs, these jobs that support legislation, out of legislation itself and means that this can be handled away from this place and makes things more streamlined. We certainly agree with that.

With the Coroners Act there are some changes. A number of powers are transferred from this legislation to the minister. A coroner currently has the power to issue both summonses and bench warrants for an individual to give evidence at an inquest. The form these take will no longer be set out in the act, but will be prescribed by the minister by regulation. Again, this is to allow the ministry to stay modern, to stay current, to allow itself to change forms that support the legislation, but you don't have to go back to the Legislature in order to do that.

Under the Ministry of Correctional Services Act, the need for a warrant to transfer inmates from one correctional institution to another is eliminated by Bill 69. The bill also allows the minister to prescribe by regulation the form of a warrant in the case of a parole violation, rather than by order in council.

As you probably are aware, in managing a jail system as large as Ontario's, with 4,000 employees in the

Ministry of Correctional Services, there is a lot of paperwork involved every time you have to transfer an offender from institution to institution, and to get involved in paperwork there is really becoming redundant in today's society. It just slows things down and requires more people to keep track of that paper. The important thing here obviously is to keep track of the offender. Sometimes we lose sight of what the core function is and we start hiring people to keep track of paper. Then I think we're off the mark. It's important to streamline legislation such as this, and this bill is going to do that.

With the Ministry of Correctional Services Act, Bill 69 also transfers the regulatory power to collect fees to cover ministry costs to the minister. Again, it's just simplifying some of the red tape that would allow fee collection to be simplified.

The Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act is another act that comes under the auspices of the Solicitor General. Under the current legislation, a search warrant may be issued on the basis of information on a note by a justice of the peace allowing an inspector to determine if an animal is in distress. The forms taken by both the oath and the warrant will no longer be prescribed in the act itself, but will be prescribed by regulation by the minister.

Again, this is a change that will allow the ministry to respond to day-to-day changes that may be required in enforcing the act. The act stays the same, the protection for animals remains the same, but what changes is basically not having to come back to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to get a change for how the form is prescribed. That sort of thing I guess was just an oversight in the past, with past assemblies and past governments, and I think today we have a better sense of how we should be streamlining our legislation.

I'll just wait for the whip to give me an indication. I know we have some more members to go. I think then I will sit down. I understand the member for Ottawa West wishes to contribute to this debate.

1610

Mr Alex Cullen (Ottawa West): I'm pleased to join this debate with respect to the government process simplification legislation, otherwise known as the red tape bills.

One of the issues we have to look at in terms of balancing the needs of government to try and seek efficiency is the requirement for due process, the requirement to ensure that there is proper public scrutiny over the exercise of these responsibilities. We have to make sure we do not simply abdicate these responsibilities in the name of efficiency, and that's part of the debate here dealing with these particular bills.

The second issue of course is what is buried in these bills, and that is the tendency towards user fees, higher user fees, greater costs for the taxpaying public to access services that up to now their taxes were paying for. Indeed, it's one of the hallmarks of this government, first of all, to seek more opportunities for regulation, to take it out of the purview of statute, to take it out of the purview

of this Legislature, merely to have government by regulation, and as well to increase user fees when indeed the government party was elected on a platform not only to reduce government in the face of taxpayers but also to reduce the cost of government, particularly to reduce taxes. Well, if you reduce taxes on the one hand and increase user fees on the other hand, the public are not stupid; they will recognize that indeed a shell game is being played here.

I'm more concerned about the role of due process. We have seen with earlier legislation — I'm sure my colleagues have referenced Bill 26, the Savings and Restructuring Act, which allows, by regulation, municipalities to be restructured, hospitals to be closed and an immense amount of change in governance and operation of basic services by fiat, by regulation, by order of council or by ministerial dictate, without the ability to have appropriate overview.

We have seen more recently, in Bill 160, the ability for the minister to apply or to use the power of regulation. I believe that is mentioned over 150 times in Bill 160.

Today we are looking at these particular bills that seek to so-call cut red tape, but when you look at it again, you will see that an awful lot of the time things are being delegated to ministerial authority.

Some of these things are understandable. Some of these things actually are helpful and do move the ability of government, of administration, to do its job more efficiently. Those are the things that we on this side of the House do not oppose. But there is always that concern in terms of appropriate balance, because we on this side of the House know that there is a role for due process, that there is a reason why we have oversight, why we have regulation.

If we look at the specifics of the legislation, for example, with respect to Bill 64, which deals with trying to simplify the activities within the Ministry of Consumer and Commercial Relations, again one sees the kind of balance that's needed. It's a very small example, and that is the amendment to the Motor Vehicle Repair Act. The bill takes away the government's power to dictate the size, form and style of sign that must be posted in a conspicuous place by automobile repair shops for prospective customers. This was to ensure that customers coming into the shop knew the establishment was properly licensed and had licensed mechanics. The size would be uniform so people could look for and recognize that certificate, which would show that indeed this was a place that met certain standards and that the consumers' interests were being protected.

What happens here is that that's simply being taken away. Signs must still be posted stating information, such as that written estimates are available on request and the cost of labour etc, but the government will no longer require how the signs will look. What that means of course is that we will not have consistency. Clients may not be able to see the sign; it may be a postage-stamp sign; it may be cluttered up with other information, other posters, other advertising.

There are those who say: "Well, look, it's a responsible industry. We shouldn't have to worry about it." The reason why it is a responsible industry is that government has taken the public interest in ensuring that the signs were of a certain size, followed a certain format and met the public interest.

It is intriguing to have on one side the government saying, "We shall no longer have a common format, size and form for these particular services dealing with the public," but when it comes to property taxes and the ability for municipalities to provide information on property tax bills, indeed the government has taken that kind of power and is dictating not only the form, the size and the information that's going to be on the bill, but information that will not be permitted to be on the bill: as my colleague from St Catharines says, a form of censorship.

Why therefore is it good in the private sector not to require businesses to post those very things that we think are in the public interest, that there are such things as information about written estimates being available on request, what the cost of labour is etc, in a common format, in a conspicuous format — "Oh, no, government must get out of the way here" — but on the other hand they require this kind of intervention in another level of government's ability to provide information to taxpayers? It is somewhat contradictory.

The other legislation that we see here in Bill 65, which deals with economic development, trade and tourism: Quite frankly, what happens here is that this will simply allow certain agencies to set new fees, to set new user fees. We're looking, for example, at Ontario Place, at the St Clair Parkway. As well, under the Tourism Act the minister is being given sweeping powers to set new fees, and it allows the minister to deny permits unless the permit fees have been paid.

Again one might say: "We're just trying to get rid of red tape here. These fees will always be charged." But quite frankly, the previous process involved far more public scrutiny in ensuring that the public interest would be met in dealing with these things. Now it's simply a licence for increases.

Another bill that is before us today deals with Bill 66, which is a red tape simplification bill for the Ministry of Environment and Energy. This is one area where the government — how shall I say this? "Commitment" is too weak a word. It's a blitzkrieg attack on environmental regulations in the area of the environment which from their point of view is simply to reduce the cost to business. All these regulations dealing with the environment, going on and on and on, simply are seen as impediments to the cost of business.

We have to look at the other side, which is protection of the public interest. These regulations indeed are required to do that. What is happening here is that the ministry is being given sweeping approvals.

I could go on for quite a while on these bills. I just wanted to highlight some of the major points that concern us on this side. None of us here is addicted or dedicated to red tape, but there is a reason why we have regulation and due process.

1620

Mr Bradley: I first of all want to mention how we're dealing with five separate bills in two hours of debate in the Legislature this afternoon. That is because of an unprecedented, in its specific terms, time allocation motion. That is a motion that restricts and closes debate off on a particular bill.

Last night I rose in the House along with some of my colleagues to indicate why I felt this time allocation motion, which forces us to deal with these several bills in two hours, was in fact out of order.

My view is that it was a very significant, substantial and landmark ruling last night, which will now permit governments, in the sense of and in the need for expediency, to simply introduce bills late in a session or introduce bills early and not deal with them until late in a session and then simply sweep them through the House with one closure motion. I think that is very destructive of democracy, I think that's exceedingly dangerous and I think every time the government moves on a procedural matter it moves more drastically and without thought of the future consequences, which is somewhat the style of the government.

The particular initiative this afternoon that we are dealing with, the so-called red tape bills of the Red Tape Review Commission, is not a revolutionary initiative as characterized. We had a big press conference and a dog-and-pony show to do with this. Governments routinely assess and look at regulations that are in effect to determine whether or not they are still relevant and still required and routinely eliminate them. This government, because it is so right wing, because it wants to appeal to people with this broad brush called "red tape," has made a major initiative out of this.

This is not to say, however, that there aren't some problems with some of these so-called red tape bills. What one always has to look out for is the wolf in sheep's clothing, that is, some regulations which are being eliminated in the name of getting rid of red tape which in fact do not represent benign initiatives on the part of the government.

All of this, of course, is part of the government's desire to reduce the role played by various ministries, and that is because it has to feed its tax cut. We will recall that this government, irresponsibly in the minds of many small-conservative economists, decided to promise and implement a 30% cut in the provincial income tax. Of course, that would mean, when fully implemented, the government would lose, as a result, \$5 billion a year in revenue.

That means the government has to borrow that money and pay interest on that money and accumulate even more debt, when the government contended its desire was to reduce that debt. It means as well, with this tax cut, that the wealthiest people in our society will get the largest amount of money in terms of the particular tax cut. It means as well deep and painful cuts in areas such as health care and education and other areas of a regulatory nature, such as consumer and commercial relations and the environment.

Even conservative economists, when you canvass a number of them and ask, "What is the combined effect of income tax cuts and at the same time deep cuts in government program spending?" will tell you it's a contractionary effect and that any additional revenues we're seeing coming in are as a result of the overall economy in the country and the province and the influence of the United States, where the economy is in fact booming. We benefit immensely from that because of our trade relationship with the United States.

I look at some of the provisions. Some of them, as I say, are quite benign, they are routine, we don't have a problem with them. But let's look at the Ministry of Consumer and Commercial Relations, and I think this is a very underrated ministry. I think if you ask the people of this province, "Would you like to have a ministry which would protect you from shysters and gougers and people who are engaging in illicit activities or bad business practices?" largely they would say yes. The people who would be most vociferous in their support for it would be the overwhelming majority of honest business people out there who don't want to see the crooks, shysters and con men and con women flourishing while they, who carry on their business honestly, are put at a disadvantage.

I look at the Consumer Protection Act. It removes the requirement for itinerant sellers, that's door-to-door sellers, to be registered with the government. I'll tell you, that's very handy, because you have a better chance of keeping track of those people. In terms of the economic development, trade and tourism act, I look at the Historical Parks Act, the Ontario Place Corporation Act, the St Clair Parkway Commission Act and the Tourism Act, and all this is about is the government imposing new fees.

Remember what Mike Harris said — one of the things I agreed with him on — when he said a user fee is a tax. Now we're going to go to over 200 new taxes by the Harris government. I count 198 with this bill and the new hikes we're going to see as a result, the user fees; we're going to see well over 200 increases in taxes by the Mike Harris government in just a little over two years. That is simply not acceptable to people, particularly when the government characterized itself as being tax fighters instead of tax hikers. What it means in effect when you raise those user fees is that it is then easiest for the people of greatest wealth to be able to afford to access the institutions and the parks and so on that I mentioned, and people of lesser means will be unable to do so.

It talks about changes to the Environmental Protection Act, the Ontario Energy Board Act. Other ministries no longer have to be given notice of pipeline applications. Let me tell you, a lot of ministries are affected. The Ministry of Agriculture is one that I think of right away that would be affected by this. It gives sweeping powers to set fees for copies of documents. Again, if you're well-to-do, then you're able to afford those fees; if you're not, you're just out of luck. But that's the way this government is moving.

There are several of these I look at. The Health Protection and Promotion Act: The power of the Lieutenant

Governor in Council to make regulations respecting slaughterhouses is removed. If we look at what's happening in Britain right now, wouldn't you want to see a strong regulatory regime in effect to protect our slaughterhouses, to protect the consumer? What everybody has to understand is that farmers and producers themselves have the greatest vested interest in a strong regulatory regime which ensures the very best of food safety protection. They're the ones who want to see it the most, and we see the government moving in the opposite direction.

We see amendments to the Mining Act. My northern members would be able to tell us more about those. New powers to the Lieutenant Governor in Council give these powers to the minister. In other words, taking them away from the whole cabinet, where there can be a discussion of the implications, and giving them to single ministers I think is very dangerous.

Fees in the Private Investigators and Security Guards Act: again a chance for the provincial government to individually gouge people.

While there are some provisions in these bills which are supportable and acceptable and somewhat benign, we have to assess carefully each of them, and unfortunately, when we sweep them all into one big two-hour debate on five different bills, that's impossible to do.

Mrs Boyd: I'm pleased to have an opportunity, even if it is only very brief because of the time allocation motion on these bills, to speak about the implications of these so-called red tape bills. One of the issues we have seen again and again from this government is its desire to take away from various levels of government some of the authority and some of the ability to ensure that the people of Ontario continue to be protected by regulation. By going into a very big publicity stunt, I would say, about the findings of the Red Tape Review Commission — you know, the little book with the little piece of red tape around it that had to be cut before you could open it — the suggestion was, very consistent with the kind of rhetoric of this government, that this province somehow is tied up in red tape and no one is able to do business here.

The Red Tape Review Commission of course made many, many recommendations that don't appear in these bills. There is another set, and all we can say is how amazed we are that the whole other set in the 100 series wasn't rolled into the same time allocation motion.

Mr Speaker, I need to interrupt myself. I'm going to be sharing my time with the member for Windsor-Riverside, and I realize I should have said that when I first stood up.

1630

One of the things that frightens us is that with this set of red tape bills and the constant rhetoric on the part of the government that these are minor changes, housekeeping changes, and that the next set, which they've already put forward and some of which have already been passed, are just housekeeping and so on, some of the more terrifying, frankly, recommendations in that red tape report might come forward and people might be lulled into the belief that they are also relatively innocuous.

There is no question, when we look at these series of bills and the ones that were pulled out of it and passed previously — the red tape bill for health, which I believe was Bill 67, and the bill we passed the other evening, Bill 63, and the Attorney General's red tape bill, Bill 61 — these bills are not of momentous effect upon the way this government works, the way the province works. That means that the bills in and of themselves hardly make the kind of difference that the government appears to be claiming they would, when they take the unusual step of rolling these all together in one time allocation motion. One would think they were of momentous occasion, something very urgent to get through before this House rises and the government prorogues this session, when in fact they are relatively innocuous.

When I look at the number of hours that have now been spent, particularly by the House leaders in meeting after meeting, and then last evening, with the whole session being devoted to the time allocation motion, and then the two hours today; if we look at our experience with Bill 61, Bill 63, Bill 67, these bills could have been passed, had they been called by the government, in one session each, without the kind of outcry and the kind of demonstration, the muscle-flexing that this government has done with respect to the time allocation motion.

It is simply a demonstration of the government's belief that it ought not to have to come to the public forum and defend the ideas it has; its belief that if someone wants to debate and ask questions about an action that a minister wants to do or the government wants to do, or in this case, the right-wing Red Tape Review Commission wants to do, that somehow asking questions, debating issues, is holding the matter up, and that's what we see again and again.

One of the issues I want to raise, which the member for St Catharines raised just briefly towards the end of his speech, is the issue in all these bills, where powers that once could only be exercised through the cabinet, the regulatory powers of the various ministries of government, are systematically being taken away and given to ministers. One by one, these may not seem like extraordinary powers. Let's have some examples of that. In the environment and energy bill, for example, the minister will be able to classify pesticides, rather than doing it by regulation, which would require cabinet approval. Someone might say: "Doesn't that make sense? Does the whole cabinet have to look at the issues around pesticides?" People in the environmental community would say, "Absolutely they do." It's the principle of the joint responsibility of the government, the cabinet of the day, not the responsibility of one minister.

If it turns out that that regulatory power is exercised wrongly and there is a public disaster as a result, and I don't think it's overspeaking to suggest that many environmentalists believe that some of the pesticides that corporations have tried to get permission to use could indeed have disastrous effects on the health and the safety of the community — should that occur, the government can say: "But we didn't even know about this. It's this minister." So the government isn't jointly and collectively

responsible for that decision; the minister is. Of course, it's very easy to lop off the privileges of a person and send them back to the back bench and say, "There, we've done our job," and the government not exercise that responsibility.

Again and again in these bills and in the other set of red tape bills, and certainly in all the suggestions in that fancy-dancey report the Red Tape Review Commission came forward with, this is what we see again and again: a downloading, if you like, of the responsibility of a cabinet-based responsible government on to individual ministers. The net result is an erosion of the responsibility of government as we know it.

Is it going to make things faster? Sure. I used to be in the legislation and regulations committee, and I believe you did too, Madam Speaker, and we know how often, as busy cabinet members, we wished we didn't have to sit there going over the detail of a lot of regulations. I don't think there's any question. So we have some sympathy for our colleagues who are now in cabinet, but you don't simply dump that responsibility. I can't tell you how often we found things in regulations that were brought in front of us by the bureaucracy that we were told were mere housekeeping items but in fact had very real impact and would have been a danger in one way or another to people.

In fact, I remember on one occasion — and Madam Speaker may remember it as well. It was an issue around the signage on school buses, which would interest my friend from Essex-Kent. Some suggestions had come forward which would have made the problem he has identified in terms of the safety of school buses much more serious, because it would have changed some of the familiar signage and, as I recall, would have allowed flashing lights in a way that, we discovered, because we wanted to go into that more deeply, might have caused even more confusion for drivers. Heaven knows, children are often in enough danger, as the member for Essex-Kent has pointed out again and again in this place, without adding to that confusion.

While when you're a busy person and you see things coming in front of first the legislation and regulations committee and then in front of the whole cabinet, there is a tendency for people to say: "Do we have to see all this stuff? Why can't the minister just look after this?" The minister is often the only one who has the details, unless of course the minister's colleagues on the legislation and regulations committee have taken their job seriously and are prepared to either advocate on behalf of a regulation or to point out the issues with it.

I would warn the government and certainly warn the people of Ontario that sometimes the easy way, the fast way, is not necessarily the best way or the safest way for the population and, as my colleague from Windsor-Riverside said, not necessarily the cheapest way, because if a mistake is made and it has to be rectified — if it can be rectified, because in some cases it might not be able to be rectified — then it costs us a great deal. Often that cost would not only be in terms of dollars but in terms of

suffering, as it might have been in the case that I was thinking of around the signage and the stop signs for school buses.

1640

Hidden in these bills are probably little details that would certainly not seem ominous even to those of us who have looked through them and worried about them initially, but the end effect may be different than what we expect. If that were to happen, because this has been done by the Legislature, we all of course have some joint responsibility, even those of us who oppose it.

Madam Speaker, you need to know that we have made it clear again and again on these bills, as on the others, that what we want in this place is discussion about the implications. Not necessarily that we intend to prolong that, not necessarily that we intend to oppose the bills, but that we believe part of our job as legislators is to make sure there is sufficient discussion of moves that come forward from the government of the day that people know what is actually happening. Because the government has chosen to act in a very draconian way in lumping all these bills together, it makes it difficult one by one to go through in a way that the general public gets a sense of what is going on.

I would say to you, and I'm going to go through them just briefly, that Bill 65, the economic development, trade and tourism red tape bill, which amends the Historical Parks Act, Ontario Place Corporation Act, St. Clair Parkway Commission Act and the Tourism Act, allows the fees that are applicable under all of those acts now to be changed without ever going through the regulatory process that I spoke of, the legislation and regulations committee and then to cabinet and then through the process of publication. The minister would still need to give permission for a fee change, but a regulation wouldn't be required.

We know what the process is when regulations change. There needs to be a publishing of those regulations. Of course the assumption has been that when regulations change all those affected by those regulations are going to receive information. I know from the many complaints I have received from constituents that in fact this government is not doing a very good job of ensuring that regulations reach those who most need them. I think particularly of the Ministry of Finance, where I know I'm receiving many complaints from people where regulations changed under the Corporations Tax Act and people weren't informed and they suddenly are receiving huge bills for taxes they didn't even know they were going to have to pay, because there was a different regime of calculating who was in what class of taxpayer under that act.

But normally governments, when regulations change, make sure that those who are covered by those regulations know that the rules of the game have changed. Now what will happen is ministers and ministries are able to make these changes. What is the notification process going to be? How will people know?

If, for example, there were to be an objection about fees charged — because of course we know that, with this

government losing the tax revenue it is losing as a result of its foolish tax cut, they have a revenue problem, even though they don't admit it, and that's why they are making it easier to have ministers increase fees with no process, because then there's no way to object and there's no way for people to have due process in terms of objecting to those fees when the regulatory regime changes.

I wonder on the Historical Parks Act, for example, what are we talking about when we're suddenly saying the minister is going to be able to raise these fees? How are the rest of us, as people who might want to visit some of the parks that come under that act, going to know what the fees are and what our rights are with respect to any changes?

Bill 66, which I mentioned before, is the environment and energy act. Again, the first item in the bill is what is called a streamlining amendment, a series of streamlining amendments, to another whole series of acts: the Consolidated Hearings Act, the Environmental Protection Act, the Ontario Energy Board Act, the Ontario Water Resources Act and the Pesticides Act.

Streamlining tends to suggest that there's a relaxation of the rules, because, of course, rules are what this government objects to. This government wants to do what it wants to do when it wants to do it without any rules. One of the ways to change the rules of the game is to pass these bills that deal with huge numbers of other acts and simply pass them off as streamlining amendments.

One of the ways they're going to streamline the Environmental Appeal Board hearings, for example, on wells would be that if people give evidence orally, it wouldn't have to be recorded. That may not sound too serious but it means that there's no record of what goes on at those appeal board hearings.

This is not the first time we've seen an effort to keep the record keeping of the actions of appeal boards to a minimum. We certainly saw in Bill 142 a lot of changes to the appeal process, many of which meant that people wouldn't even be informed of what the situation was in regard to their status with respect to an appeal. A lot of the relaxation of rules around keeping of records and informing of citizens about what was going on were changed in the entire welfare system by Bill 142.

I don't know and I couldn't tell you how often oral evidence is given in an Environmental Appeal Board hearing on wells. I don't know how many people this would affect and certainly none of the information provided by the ministry around this bill gave anybody any information about how many people would be affected by this. That's the other thing that gets lost when we have bills like this pushed through and supposedly just being housekeeping. We don't have the normal backup information which tells you how many people are likely to be affected and what the overall impact might be.

The Ontario Energy Board under Bill 66 is going to be able, if the minister says it's okay, and that's the only person who has to say it's okay, to impose fees for copies of documents. No more regulation around how those fees would be decided. Cabinet would not have to approve this.

The Minister of Energy could simply say, "Oh yes, if you want these documents now you're going to have to pay this fee," and no collective responsibility about what the level might be.

It is a minor amendment, it may not affect a great many people, but when you add it to the many other actions of this government that have made it harder and harder for people to get a hearing, for people to obtain justice, it becomes a more serious issue.

Bill 68, northern development and mines: This is a relatively minor change that seems to affect nobody in the first part, the repeal of the Canada Company's Lands Act of 1922 and a decision that now the property owners who own the surface rights to land that's within the 571,000 acres that is covered by this act would also own the mineral rights and wouldn't have to go through a process of first refusal.

1650

This I think is an example of red tape. It seems to me that this is a sterling example of taking away a process that may have made sense in 1922 when this act was passed, when the Canada Co handed its land back to the Ontario government, but doesn't make any sense now. Of course we wouldn't be opposing that, but as we say, we are not clear exactly why the government is repealing the part of the Mining Act that deals with licensing of mineral refineries. This piece of the act was put in place to try and ensure that people who are illegally refining ore, and in particular gold, could be checked, and by having a process where people paid a fee to be licensed to do this, they had a way of checking on who was able to do this and who wasn't.

I gather that the fee, which I think is only about \$50, collected from the number of people who were licensed really wasn't very economically productive, so the government has decided to repeal it. It may be of very little consequence, but it certainly is of great interest to those who may have seen this as a protection against illegal refining.

I come to Bill 69, which I think is the most serious and possibly the one which indeed is the wolf in sheep's clothing, as the member for St Catharines talked about it, because in this act for the Solicitor General and corrections there are a number of cases where warrants no longer are necessary and where the need to have that kind of documentation around the movement of prisoners now is no longer necessary. The minister explained that for young offenders, for adult offenders who are in the corrections system, this is no longer necessary because, of course, there will at some point in the future be some kind of tracking mechanism through this wonderful new information system that we keep hearing is going to be put in place some time.

But right now, the only way often that you know, if you are the family member of an offender, is through the system of warrants, because people are moved around in our corrections system a great deal. We know about that here in this place, because we have heard the sad saga of the Bluewater, Exeter Road and finally the Wellington

saga of James Lonnee and the many moves that that young man made within the prison system before his unfortunate murder while he was in the care of the Solicitor General.

It is important, and one of the first signs of a just society is ensuring that the rights of prisoners are respected and that no state is able to move prisoners around and keep their whereabouts hidden from those who are their advocates. If in fact this government is not quite as incompetent about the information system that supposedly is being developed to track prisoners as it was about the family support plan, as we clearly aren't getting anywhere with the social assistance information system that's supposed to be set up — we keep hearing that there's no information system around child abuse and neglect — maybe this is going to be a different issue.

But in the meantime, I would think that if I were a parent or a spouse of someone who is in the corrections system, this would send a cold shiver down my spine. I think we all should be very vigilant. Canada has criticized other nations that have had policies in place that allow for the unrestricted, unmonitored movement of prisoners within their system, and this seems to me to be the thin edge of the wedge, particularly when it's being brought forward by a Solicitor General who clearly has a punitive view of the entire notion of corrections. He doesn't believe in corrections. All the time he's talking about putting people in jail and throwing away the, so it's scant comfort to me to see this minister bring forward this act and say it's housekeeping when there don't have to be warrants for prisoners any more.

It's interesting, of course, that the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act is also going to be changed so that a warrant isn't required, that the form for the warrant is going to be in the hands of the minister as well. Given the very sympathetic speeches from people on all sides of the House about the member for St Andrew-St Patrick's bill around expanding the ability of officers to act under this act to protect animals who are in danger of abuse or neglect, I wonder if this has been taken into that picture and what it really means in terms of the kind of protection she is bringing forward.

I am going to let my friend from Windsor-Riverside complete the time and just finish by saying that we continue to be very sceptical of a government that has acted in the draconian and undemocratic way this government has acted when it brings forward acts that it says are "merely housekeeping" and then takes additional draconian measures to ensure they are in place when they are apparently of so little effect.

Mr Wayne Lessard (Windsor-Riverside): I would like to say that it's a great pleasure to be able to participate in this debate this afternoon with respect to I guess what you would call an omnibus time allocation motion.

Once again, we've seen this government introduce a time allocation motion to shut down debate, to limit the opportunity of opposition members to be able to participate in it. Unlike other time allocation motions, this one is an omnibus time allocation motion. It lists six bills that are going to have the time for debate limited, unlike many

others where they only deal with limiting debate on one bill.

It really makes me concerned that if this direction continues, if this government continues on this track, after we've prorogued and the next session begins again in March, we might have a session that only lasts a week. At the beginning of the week the government tables all the legislation they have on their agenda. The next day they table the time allocation motion to deal with it all, require one day's debate and then pass it all for third reading by the end of the week.

That's the direction this government is going. They really treat the Legislature and the opposition members here as red tape, not just some of the regulations we have on the books here.

I think that as members of the opposition we always have to be very vigilant about what this government is doing and make sure that what they say they're going to do is what is actually in the legislation. We've seen, based on the direction this government is going, that we have to be even more vigilant to make sure they're doing what they say they're going to do and that the legislation actually says what they say it does.

We know there has to be a balance between what might be referred to as red tape and what might be referred to as necessary regulation. I would like to assume that a lot of the legislation that has been introduced that we're dealing with today had a purpose at some point in time when it was introduced. A lot of it was introduced during the time of Bill Davis's Conservative government. They thought it was important enough to introduce some of these regulatory and legislative requirements, so why are they now considered to be just red tape?

There is good reason to have regulations in legislation in existence. I think we need to keep a number of those things in mind when we're considering whether what's included in these bills we're debating here today is actually red tape or whether they are things that are necessary for the protection of the environment, for example, or to protect the health and safety of workers or of citizens, whether this is regulation that deals with the protection of consumers so that they don't get products that are dangerous or don't do what they claim to do.

We need regulations that deal with the protection of human rights and the rights of minorities. We also need regulations that protect the interests of those who find it difficult to protect themselves, like those with disabilities, children and senior citizens. When you consider those things in the context of the way this government has introduced legislation over this past session, we have to be very suspicious when the government says, "We're just trying to get rid of red tape," because we've seen what effect their move to become more efficient has had on children, for example, who are dependent upon support that is paid by parents through the family support plan. They closed the office in Windsor. They had no backup plans, no plans to carry out the services that were being carried on in Windsor, and left families suffering who couldn't pay the rent and couldn't feed their kids, all as a

result of this government's bungling in the name of greater efficiency. That's why we need to be ever vigilant when we see these bills being introduced as a way to eliminate red tape.

1700

My friend from London Centre has referred to many of these bills, and I think it's something we need to keep in mind, the fact that these bills were introduced by the government on June 5, 1996, not June 5 of this year but over a year and a half ago. Why is it that on Wednesday, December 17, the day before this Legislature is set to rise until March, we find ourselves, as an opposition party, being time-allocated to two hours to ensure that this legislation gets passed by tomorrow? That doesn't make any common sense to me. It really is a demonstration of this government's inability to handle the agenda they're trying to pursue. It's complete mismanagement. That's what it is.

One of these bills has to deal with the simplification of government processes and improvement of efficiency in the Ministry of Consumer and Commercial Relations. That's one of the bills. The other one has to deal with the Ministry of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism. There are a lot of things this government says — that when they're eliminating red tape, they're doing it because they say it's going to save money, that all this is going to be used to help them fund their phoney tax cut. But in this Bill 65 dealing with the Ministry of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism —

Mr Wildman: It doesn't save any money.

Mr Lessard: It doesn't save any money, the member for Algoma has indicated. What it does is eliminate the power to set fees by regulation and it gives that power to set fees to the minister without having to pass any regulation whatsoever. When it comes to the historical parks, when it comes to Ontario Place, when it comes to the St Clair Parkway and when it comes to other tourism facilities in the province, the minister is now going to be able to set fees without having to go through that nasty process of passing a regulation.

They want to have the power to raise fees because they don't want to say that they're raising taxes. They want to say they're lowering taxes, but they need to find that money from somewhere else. They're going to get that from families who, when the summer is reached, if they have any money after spending it on their children's increased tuition fees, if they have some money to travel around the province, are going to find that any savings, as insignificant as we think they are, are going to have to be spent on user fees. This Premier, Mike Harris, had said user fees were the same as taxes, but we don't hear him say that any more.

Bill 66, An Act to simplify government processes and to improve efficiency in the Ministry of Environment and Energy: If any one of these bills causes me the greatest concern, it's this one. One of the changes is to change the Environmental Protection Act so that the appeal board may have one-member panels instead of three-member panels. It also gives the Ontario Energy Board, once

again, the approval to set fees without the need to do it by regulation, more fee-making power, increasing taxes through ministerial discretion.

When we see this government making changes to environmental legislation, it really makes me concerned, because I recall the comments that were made by the Environmental Commissioner, Eva Ligeti, who I was proud we were able to appoint when the NDP were in government. In her report from 1996, she had this to say about what this government was doing with respect to environmental legislation:

"Throughout 1996, ministries demonstrated an alarming lack of environmental vision. They failed to put their stated environmental values into action. Their activities were characterized by omnibus-style legislation, cuts to environmental programs and the shift of environmental responsibilities to municipalities and the private sector."

If there is anything that we need to keep our eyes and ears attending to, it's this government's haste to eliminate red tape, to reduce the amount of resources that go to the Ministry of Environment and Energy, the downloading of responsibilities on to municipalities and the private sector. We need to consider what impact that's going to have on the environment, especially in light of the comments that were made by the Environmental Commissioner in her most recent report.

She goes on to say in this report, when she's talking about specific impacts of what this government has been doing:

"For years, the Ministry of Environment and Energy and the Ministry of Health provided drinking water testing to municipalities. With little notice, these services were transferred to municipalities that had to find testing labs and the money to pay for them. The public was not consulted, nor were the municipalities."

This government would have you believe that the testing of drinking water is just a whole lot of red tape, a cost that the Ministry of Environment shouldn't have to bear the burden of, and it should just be dumped on municipalities and on the private sector.

The commissioner goes on to say, "This move to self-monitoring was motivated by saving money, not by better environmental protection." That's what it all comes down to for this government: saving money. But we find that time and time again their cost-saving measures don't save money; they cost more and they do not protect the public interest.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Mr Sterling has moved third reading of Bill 64. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion, please say "aye."

Those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Mr Sterling has moved third reading of Bill 65. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Mr Sterling has moved third reading of Bill 66. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion, please say "aye."

Those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

1710

Mr Sterling has moved third reading of Bill 68. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

Those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Mr Sterling has moved third reading of Bill 69. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion, please say "aye."

Those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Mr Gerretsen: On a point of order, Madam Speaker: I'm awaiting your ruling in this matter. Is it parliamentarily correct to have all of these bills dealt with at once in sequence like this without any subsequent debate on each bill? I'm just asking for your ruling on that, because this must be highly unusual. It has got to be an absolute first in Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker: To the member for Kingston and The Islands, I believe you know the answer to that. There was a ruling made previously that this bill, as you well know —

Mr Gerretsen: Do you agree with that ruling?

The Deputy Speaker: That's beside the point, isn't it? I made a ruling and we're going to stick to it.

MILK AMENDMENT ACT, 1997

LOI DE 1997 MODIFIANT

LA LOI SUR LE LAIT

Mr Villeneuve moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 170, An Act to amend the Milk Act / Projet de loi 170, Loi modifiant la Loi sur le lait.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): On a point of order, Madam Speaker: I just have a question which I need some clarification on in terms of the orders. We have now approximately 45 minutes left in this sessional day. According to the rules, this bill cannot then be called this evening, which is another sessional day. I'm wondering, if we were prepared to give unanimous consent to allow for the bill to be called at second reading again in case it doesn't complete second reading by 6, whether it would be proper to do that now or at 6.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): If you'd just give me a moment, I think you can't do that, but I'll check with the table.

Actually, you can; there are a few things here and there that by unanimous consent can't be done, but as it turns out, this is one that you can. Do you want to move that now?

Mr Wildman: I'm just wondering if it's better to do it now or at 6. It doesn't matter to me.

The Deputy Speaker: It's up to you.

Mr Wildman: At 6.

Hon Noble Villeneuve (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, minister responsible for francophone affairs): I would like to ask consent of the House to share my time with the parliamentary assistant, the honourable member for Hastings-Peterborough.

The Deputy Speaker: Under the new rules, you don't have to ask for consent, but thank you for telling me.

Hon Mr Villeneuve: It's my pleasure to introduce Bill 170 for second reading, a bill that will ensure the continued supply of safe, high-quality dairy products that Ontario consumers have come to be accustomed to for many years. This is due to the very good job that has been done in the inspection of raw milk from farm to processing plant.

The amendments contained in this bill will enable the government to transfer the delivery of farm inspection services to the very capable hands of an organization known as the Dairy Farmers of Ontario. This organization represents some 7,500 dairy producers across the province. In May, we signed an agreement in principle with the Dairy Farmers of Ontario setting out the rules and the responsibilities of each of the partners.

I believe, as this government believes, there are many services that can be much more effectively delivered by organizations other than the government itself, and this is one of many examples. As the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, we've already proven this on a number of occasions, and I'll cite an example here, the creation of a crown corporation known as AgriCorp. This arm's-length agency assumed responsibility for delivering crop insurance, market revenue insurance and other agrifood services in January 1997. It is run by a board with majority representation by farmers, the people who are in the business and who indeed know best the needs of their peers. In fact, farmers and their organizations strongly supported the agency's creation and development.

AgriCorp's a terrific success story. It not only delivers services more efficiently and responsibly, it gets government out of micromanaging an area where really governments do not belong.

AgriCorp is also aggressively seeking out new business. In April of this past year, the agency contracted with the Ontario tomato seedling growers' marketing board to provide plant counting services for the industry. Plants must be counted to ensure that growers pay only for the ones that are viable and indeed survive.

AgriCorp provides much-needed third-party service that ensures fairness in the tomato-growing industry and it accomplishes the job on time and on budget. Two hundred million tomato plants were counted in a six-week period by a small team from the Leamington area.

This is only one of several services this agency is developing to better serve Ontario's agrifood sector from farmer to processor to consumer. While AgriCorp is still ultimately accountable to the ministry, the skilled people who run it have brought a more business-like approach to service delivery, with all the benefits for clients and taxpayers that this indeed entails.

The industry supports and depends on 32 fluid milk processing plants, two creameries, 15 industrial plants that produce everything from ice cream to cottage cheese to yoghurt etc and 40 cheddar and specialty cheese plants operated across the province.

It all adds up to a lot of economic activity, jobs in rural communities and jobs for the entire province. A good deal of this success can be attributed to the strong organization we have in the dairy farmers of farmers of Ontario and the many activities that they carry out as representatives of the 7,500 or so dairy farms across this province.

Besides establishing quality, it also assists in setting a price for milk that will provide the dairy farmers with a reasonable return. Dairy farmers coordinate the transportation of milk from farms to plants. It provides herd management advice and assistance to milk producers to help them to be as efficient as possible. It also develops policy and advocates strongly on behalf of producers that it represents.

The Dairy Farmers of Ontario has been and continues to be a strong contributor to numerous government policies and programs. Dairy farmers are well aware of their responsibility in continuing to produce dairy products that are the best in the world. That's been proven and will continue to be so. I'm confident the Dairy Farmers of Ontario will continue the raw milk quality program to the full benefit of Ontario consumers and taxpayers, and indeed we are 11 million-plus consumers in this province.

With the amendments contained in Bill 170 the program will be delivered in a way that simplifies the system, helps the food industry grow and, above all, protects Ontario's consumers. It is a real pleasure and honour for me to bring Bill 170 to second reading and hopefully to be part of the law of the province of Ontario before we recess later this week.

Mr Harry Danford (Hastings-Peterborough): I'm also pleased to be able to speak this afternoon in support of Bill 170. I feel it's a piece of legislation whose time has definitely come. The amendments contained in this bill will mean greater efficiency and better service in our dairy farm inspection system, while at the same time ensuring our high standards for milk quality continue to be met.

This government was elected on a platform that included increasing efficiency and reducing the waste that had driven up the deficit and hindered economic growth for many years. Bill 170 is one of the steps this ministry is taking to provide better service and better value for the taxpayer's dollar. As my honourable colleague has said, the amendments we're looking at today provide the legislative framework for a true partnership between the dairy farmers of Ontario and the government.

1720

The transfer of delivery of on-farm milk inspection to the DFO is a logical progression in the evolution of the industry. For years this organization has distinguished itself by being a strong player with its member producers, with the industry and with different levels of government. Its established organizational structure with a solid network of field representatives is well suited to taking on the job.

Since the agreement in principle was signed in May, the ministry has been working with the DFO to ensure that the roles and responsibilities of each partner are clearly defined. The bill before us will enable the DFO to assume responsibility for dairy farm inspection and enforcement; producer hearings and appeals; bulk tank milk grader training, certification, inspection and enforcement; and bulk tank truck inspection. These services would be provided to all milk and cream producers and transporters in the province.

The ministry has been working with the organization to ensure a smooth transition. Intensive training is being provided to the DFO's field representatives who will take on the inspection jobs, and five of the ministry's current milk quality advisers will be hired by the organization to bolster their ranks. This will actually mean an increase in the level of service that is currently provided.

As Minister Villeneuve has indicated, we will also be investing \$300,000 annually over the next four years in this partnership.

With Bill 170, we're committed to implementing an innovative, better way of delivering milk inspection services at a reduced cost to taxpayers. The framework for the transfer is built on a model that has proven successful with other government inspection services. Members of the Legislature and the public can be assured that ultimately the government remains accountable for the milk inspection system. We will continue to set health and safety standards and monitor the delivery of the services through a regular reporting mechanism that will be set up under the partnership agreement with the DFO. OMAFRA will also retain regulatory policymaking powers related to provincial responsibilities under the trade agreements.

The Ontario Farm Products Marketing Commission will continue to be responsible for making regulations under section 19 of the Milk Act pertaining to the quality and safety of milk.

Getting OMAFRA out of micromanaging areas that others can do better is something we have already accomplished with great success. My honourable colleague pointed out earlier the advantages we have all realized through AgriCorp.

I'd like to talk briefly about our innovative partnership with the University of Guelph as well. As many members may know, on April 1 of this year the university assumed the operational management of the regional agricultural colleges, research stations and laboratories. By concentrating these resources under one administration, we are ensuring Ontario remains a global leader in both agrifood education, testing and research programs.

Under those partnerships, I would just like to define a few. About 600 research projects dealing with nearly every facet of agriculture and food are being financed now by the \$34 million that flows to the university from the ministry for this purpose. Agriculture and food education has been standardized, with core courses becoming common across the province. The university's presence in the regional colleges and labs speeds the delivery of research results and new technology, resulting in a more knowledgeable, self-reliant and competitive industry.

Like the University of Guelph partnership, the ministry's new partnership with the Dairy Farmers of Ontario is bound to be a winner — for dairy farmers, for the industry, for the taxpayers and indeed for the consumers.

I would like to ask all my colleagues in the House to support the passage of Bill 170 and join with us in building a prosperous, healthy future for the dairy industry and indeed for the entire agrifood sector.

Mr John C. Cleary (Cornwall): I am also pleased to participate in this debate. I would like to share my time with the members for Essex-Kent, Prescott-Russell and St Catharines.

Bill 170 amends the Milk Act to allow inspections to be provided by the farmer-run Ontario Milk Marketing Board — in other words, downloading. It reduces the size of government and transfers the costs and responsibilities to the farmer to take over and pay for inspection. The government indicated it's to make the dairy farmers of Ontario the regulatory body governing the raw milk of Ontario.

The legislation creates a framework in which the designated authority will have to maintain a range of operational standards set by the government, including maintaining adequate liability insurance; specifying which legislative responsibilities will be transferred; the right to implement fees; the cost of access to government assets and information; and requirements for regulatory performance reports.

Also, the inspection services will be transferred in two main areas: the ongoing milk sampling, where a sample of every milk shipment delivered from each dairy farmer in the province will be tested; and regional inspectors will do site visits to check the farm and the records, and follow up on problems discovered in the raw milk analysis process, levy fines and carry the process through.

For some time, the dairy industry has played an active role in the regular milk monitoring process. This testing process assesses the quality of the milk shipped, which is used to grade the farmers' payments. As we all know, higher cream content is higher payment.

The cost of the regular sampling process has for some time been paid from the dairy shipment payment. The regional inspection services have traditionally been paid for by government, but the Tory administration has moved to charge back the costs as part of a fee for service.

Notably, the legislation does not specify that the DFO, the Dairy Farmers of Ontario, will be the designated agent for the inspection service. The only other entity that might conceivably take over the responsibility is the private

sector. This leaves questions on whether the government would be interested in privatizing the legislation in the future.

Farmers say they know they will now have this responsibility, and it's part of the downloading of this government. We all know that the farmers of Ontario are good citizens. They want clean air, clean water and quality inspected foods, just the same as some of the dairy farmers in my riding whom I have spoken to lately. They tell me they know they're going to have to do this, so they might just as well get on with it now. Richard and Lorraine Lapointe and Peter and Brenda Beaudette say it's going to be their responsibility, so let's get on with it now.

I'm sorry it took so long for this to be brought forward, but as the previous member said, I think we will all be supporting this bill.

1730

Mr Pat Hoy (Essex-Kent): I'm pleased to at long last have a chance to speak to Bill 170, an amendment to the Milk Act. I want to start out by talking about the minister's management of this particular issue.

Back in May of this year, through a press release from the ministry, we learned that the minister and the Dairy Farmers of Ontario reached an agreement for the delivery of the raw milk quality program May 2, 1997. In part the announcement reads:

"An agreement in principle that paves the way for industry to deliver Ontario's raw milk quality program was announced today by Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs Minister Noble Villeneuve and the Dairy Farmers of Ontario," commonly known as the DFO. "DFO is the marketing group for all 7,800 dairy farms in Ontario and is totally financed by them."

In part it goes on to say:

"The raw milk quality program ensures the high quality and safety of raw milk prior to processing, through a combination of dairy farm inspection and laboratory testing. Ten milk quality advisors achieve these objectives by monitoring safety and quality test results and working with producers to take appropriate corrective action."

We see that the minister entered into an agreement with the Dairy Farmers of Ontario in May of this year, seven months ago. If the minister is going to force change on the dairy farmers of Ontario, it would only seem that from there should flow a reasonable timetable. Seven months ago the minister entered into this agreement, and we did not receive any legislation in regard to this change until first reading, which took place on December 4, 1997. Just a few short days ago, we in the opposition finally got to see the legislation that enables this agreement that took place in May to take place.

I noted that the minister only spoke for about six minutes at second reading. One can see that he realizes that the House has only got two days left to deal with the bills that the government believes they require.

Here we have the Dairy Farmers of Ontario in an agreement with the minister, but no enabling legislation yet has passed through this House. The minister wrote to

our House leader and the third party House leader and said, in part:

"The Dairy Farmers of Ontario has been working towards a target date of January 1, 1998, for assuming responsibility for this program," just a few short weeks from now. "In anticipation of this additional responsibility, the Dairy Farmers of Ontario has undertaken structural reorganization and training of both their own staff and ministry staff that will be employed by the Dairy Farmers of Ontario as part of this transfer."

We see that clearly the minister entered into an agreement. The Dairy Farmers of Ontario, realizing that they had to protect the integrity of their raw milk quality program, sided with the minister in this regard. Here we are, as the House is about to rise, and we are only at second reading of this bill.

I say to the minister, if you are going to force change on the agricultural community, it is only fair that a reasonable timetable be given to this Legislature and the people of Ontario, and indeed the Dairy Farmers of Ontario, to have the legislation put in place in a timely fashion.

As a matter of fact, reading from a November 11 dairy farmer update from the Dairy Farmers of Ontario, they say: "The transfer of the raw milk quality program from the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs was announced last May and should take place in early 1998. The transition date was dependent on timing of necessary legislative change." The Dairy Farmers of Ontario realized that there was legislation needed to implement an agreement that the Minister of Agriculture made in May of this year.

I want to speak a bit about this change. I want to start by taking some remarks from John Core, the chairman of the Dairy Farmers of Ontario. He is widely respected within the dairy farmers' organization, and as well he's very well respected in the farm community at large. John Core is a very thoughtful man. He has done good work for the Dairy Farmers of Ontario.

In his May 30 chairman's message, he says in part: "It had become obvious that if we wanted to maintain our standards in the face of government cutbacks, the Dairy Farmers of Ontario had to assume responsibility for those standards. We were able to negotiate transitional funding for four years from the government."

What did this chairman say? He said "in the face of government cutbacks." Once again this government is cutting programs that are of benefit to the farmers of Ontario. Those are the chairman's words, not mine. He said "in the face of government cutbacks."

What could the Dairy Farmers of Ontario do to protect the integrity of their industry, a vitally important one to Ontario and all its citizens and vitally important to themselves in respect to raw milk quality? They had no other choice but to accept the program delivered in this agreement back in May.

I think that is a very important part of the debate here today. The Ministry of Agriculture and Food is withdrawing from this program and leaving it for the Dairy Farmers of Ontario to continue on. They could say, "We

don't want this program any more," but of course they need that program to maintain the integrity of their industry and to provide the confidence they've always had for the public of Ontario that indeed their milk is of the highest standards. I don't think they had a lot of choice in this matter.

We know that the ministry is going to provide funding to the Dairy Farmers of Ontario for four years, but after that time I suspect the funding will remain in the hands of the Dairy Farmers of Ontario, and that's downloading. It's downloading on the farmers once again. This government started initially in 1995 to cut the agricultural community in the millions of dollars and they continue to do the same today, leaving the Dairy Farmers of Ontario, I suspect, with very little choice but to go into this agreement with the minister.

On December 9, the member for Guelph asked the minister a question in this House and in part it reads: "The constituents in Guelph and across this province are concerned about the health quality issues of raw milk testing and they're also concerned about the ongoing issues of giving a non-governmental organization a responsibility like this. I would like some further information on this and assurances about how the quality of milk will be protected for our consumers." Good question.

She's asking the minister, "What do you think about giving a non-governmental organization a responsibility like this?" The minister did not directly answer her question. In part he said, "...Bill 170, An Act to amend the Milk Act, in order to meet the needs and to meet the deal that had been done between the Dairy Farmers of Ontario and the Ministry of Agriculture and Food...." He didn't answer the question as to what he thought about a non-governmental body taking over this raw milk quality program.

As was the minister's wont, he went into talking about the prior government. He went on to say, "They cut by two thirds the inspectors in the raw milk area and now they're trying to preach to us." If the minister felt that the prior government cut the program by two thirds and was critical of that, why is he ending it and passing it on to the Dairy Farmers of Ontario? Why is he doing that? He's critical of something that happened in the past but he's taking it another step forward.

This \$300,000 that the government is going to provide to the Dairy Farmers of Ontario is a cut from what it is now spending. After four years, this cost will be entirely borne by the producers. What is that? That is a user fee. I say that Mike Harris was right when he said a user fee is simply a tax.

Those are some of the remarks that I make at this point. I would, at another time, speak more about the Dairy Farmers of Ontario and this agreement.

1740

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): I have a few comments I want to get on the record with respect to this piece of legislation.

I first want to look at just a bit of history. Here we are, about 24 hours away from the adjournment of the House,

and, I would expect, the proroguing of this House. Now, finally, the government recognizes that Bill 170, the Milk Act, is important. I agree, it's important. I think this is very important. It's important in terms of some economic issues, it's important in terms of some food safety and health issues, but this bill could have been announced and brought forward in the spring. We know that in the spring the government and the Dairy Farmers of Ontario actually announced an agreement which is in essence the nuts and bolts of this bill.

As you remember, Speaker, we sat here until the end of June and then we came back for a couple of days in July because the government messed up the legislative schedule and forgot that the road safety bill was important. Then we came back again in the middle of the summer and we sat all through August and September and October and a good part of November and now towards the end of December, and no Milk Act, no Bill 170.

What was the government doing in July, August, September, October, November and December? I remember a Bill 136. The government brought it forward, we debated it for a couple of weeks and got it all the way through second reading and literally almost into committee and then the government decided, "Oops, wrong bill." So we had to spend a couple of more weeks doing it all over again.

This is a government that is in such a hurry to ram through its ideological agenda that really important pieces of legislation, pieces that are important to the public, pieces that are important to public health and food safety, get left until the dying hours. Frankly, dairy farmers across Ontario didn't know today whether or not this was going to be debated.

We actually gave the government a choice yesterday. We said: "Look, let's face facts. You've got six debate periods left before Thursday night. You've got to spend two of those debate periods on the Supply Act. You have to. You've also got another one of your silly time allocation motions that you have to deal with. So of the three debate periods you've got left after dealing with those measures, what do you want?" You know what came back from the government? Bill 170 wasn't on the list. The government wanted to deal with its so-called red tape bills rather than deal with Bill 170, the Milk Act.

So here we are, literally in the dying hours, dealing with a very important piece of legislation, and stacked up behind this is Bill 146, also dealing with some important farm issues which was introduced last spring and the government hasn't seen it as enough of a priority to bring it forward any time since last spring.

I think there's a message here for farmers and the message is that this government only considers farm issues, only considers issues important to the agricultural community after it has done all of its ideological agenda. Very easily, without the participation of my party, without the participation of the NDP caucus and I guess the Liberal caucus, this legislation would not make it through the House. It is only being debated here because we have called on the government, "Put it in the House, put it up

for debate, get it in here," and finally at the dying hour it's here.

The government probably thinks we should just debate this for a few minutes and then pass it, but there are some important issues here. There are some very important issues and they need to be on the public record and, frankly, I want to know the government's position on some of these issues.

Let's recognize what is really happening here. The government is offloading a government responsibility on to the farm community and it's saying to the farm community, "You pay for it." It's true that they've put a little money in the pot to get this past the next election. There's a little money in the pot so that the new tax on farmers doesn't hit until after the next election. But let's call a spade a spade: This is a tax on farmers. You're going to give a tax break to the wealthiest people in this province. The folks over on Bay Street, the \$200,000-a-year people, the \$500,000-a-year people, the bankers with their \$3-million-a-year and \$4-million-a-year bonuses are lining up to take that tax break and they're walking to the bank with it. In the meantime, while you're giving that tax break to the wealthiest people in Ontario, you're saying to hardworking farmers across the province: "You pay more taxes. You pick up what was formerly a government responsibility and you take responsibility for it now and you pay for it. You pay the taxes."

This government may think this is a smart and nifty move. Speaking for myself and speaking for our whole caucus, we do not think it is a smart and nifty move when you increase taxes through the back door on the hardest-working people in Ontario and you give your wealthy friends on Bay Street another big tax cut. We don't think it's a smart and nifty move. In fact, let's face it. Right now, given what the milk industry is like because we've had a supply management, milk producers are not in too bad a shape. Milk producers and cream producers are not in too bad a shape. But as a result of some of the trade deals that your friend Brian Mulroney has negotiated and the evolution of those trade deals, in a few years milk producers and cream producers in this province are probably going to be facing a much tougher competitive position and they may not be as well off as they have historically been because of supply management.

After you have depleted supply management, after you have worn it down, farmers in this province may not take too kindly to this new tax that you're imposing on them as you give your wealthy friends on Bay Street incredibly rich tax cuts, incredibly rich tax gifts. I want to get that on the record because I suspect that three or four years from now, after you've pulled out the little bit of money you're prepared to put into this, a lot of small dairy farmers are going to get hit and it's going to hurt. I want it clearly on the record that at the same time that you are imposing a new tax on hardworking dairy farmers in this province, you are giving the wealthiest people in this province a \$5-billion tax gift.

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There are some other issues here that I think need to be dealt with, that we need to be sure of, because after all, part of this is food safety, ensuring that the food, the milk — milk is incredibly important; it is one of the farm products that people all across Ontario purchase and consume, so obviously the food safety and the health aspects of milk inspection and ensuring that we're getting absolutely the best product, the A-1 product, one that has a lot of consumer confidence, is important.

I want the minister here today at some point, either now or later on, to guarantee all the consumers across this province and all the dairy farmers across this province that he puts his name behind it, he puts his position behind it, that there will not in the short term and not in the longer term be any risks to the safety of the product, the health of the product and the confidence that consumers will have in the product. We want you to stand in your place and say that categorically.

There's a third part of this that I think is very important, because after all, it doesn't matter what part of our economy we're dealing with — it doesn't matter if we're dealing with the production of autos or if we're dealing with the production of pulp and paper or if we're dealing with the production of farm products or if we're dealing with public products, public services — not only do we want to continue to produce wealth in this province, not only do we want to produce products that we sell to consumers in this province and outside this province in other jurisdictions, but we want to want to distribute wealth. We want to distribute wealth, and we want to be sure that the people who work in our society are well paid and that the quality of their working life is as optimum as we can make it.

Part of this agreement is that some people who now work within the civil service —

Mr Wildman: Six of them.

Mr Hampton: — six people, will be transferred over to the new organization and they will perform not necessarily the same duties but very similar duties for the new organization which is going to be set up. I want the minister to stand in his place some time today, some time while this debate is going on, and give a guarantee that those people who are moving over to this new agency will continue to have those high-quality jobs and will continue to be paid and compensated commensurate with the important public service that they're performing, that this is not a strategy whereby the government, as I say, offloads another public service and gets the farmers to pick up a huge chunk of the cost and gets the workers to pick up the rest of the cost through taking lower wages, or no job at all. We want that from the minister too.

We want the minister to stand in his place and tell us that four years from now this will be ongoing, that eight years from now the same Dairy Farmers of Ontario will have this contract —

Hon Mr Villeneuve: You don't trust them, do you?

Mr Hampton: The minister says I don't trust the farmers. No, no. I'm like Mel Lastman; I don't trust this government. When the government says it's revenue-neutral and then people wake up and find out it has got a \$500-million pricetag, I don't trust your government.

That's why we want you on the record. We want you on the record that this is not just a four-year or three-year quick and dirty deal and then you're prepared to slide it off to someone else who says: "Hey, we'll do it and we'll pay people minimum wage. We'll do it and we'll up the user charges to farmers. We'll up the ante, the administration fees or the copayment fees to farmers."

We want that assurance from you. We want the assurance that this is going to be a good deal for farmers and a good deal for the people who do this very important public work.

Hon Mr Villeneuve: Read the bill.

Mr Hampton: The minister says this is in the bill. I want the minister to stand in his place here later on and tell us exactly where it is in the bill. You cite the sections; you tell us where it is. We want you to stand in your place and show us exactly where it is. What we want from you, Minister, are those assurances. We want to be absolutely sure and we want it on the public record that this is not just a strategy by your government to offload an important public service and then make the workers of the province pay for it, make the farmers of the province pay for it and ultimately perhaps make the consumers of the province pay for it. We want to be absolutely assured of that.

We already know that the impact on farmers is going to be a new tax on farmers. We know that. It's a user fee. Your Premier said not long ago that a user fee is just another name for a tax increase. We know farmers are going to pay more taxes on this, but we want the other assurances. We want the assurances that this is going to be a continuing body. We want the assurances that the people who work here and do this important public function are going to continue to work here and are going to continue to be well paid and well compensated for the important work they do. If you can't stand in your place and give those assurances, then I would say to dairy farmers and to a lot of other people, there's something wrong here and people had better beware.

Those are my comments. We're going to support this bill, but we want to hear categorically on the record from the government exactly what the answers are to some of the issues I've raised here today.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): The member for S-D-G & East Grenville, the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, has moved second reading of Bill 170. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Shall the bill be ordered for third reading? Agreed.

It now being nearly 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned till 6:30 of the clock later on today.

The House adjourned at 1757.

Evening sitting reported in volume B.

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A-2-010
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No. 263B



N° 263B

ISSN 1180-2987

**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

First Session, 36th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Première session, 36^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Wednesday 17 December 1997

Mercredi 17 décembre 1997

Speaker
Honourable Chris Stockwell

Président
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 17 December 1997

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 17 décembre 1997

The House met at 1831.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

FARMING AND FOOD PRODUCTION PROTECTION ACT, 1997

LOI DE 1997 SUR LA PROTECTION DE L'AGRICULTURE ET DE LA PRODUCTION ALIMENTAIRE

Resuming the adjourned debate on the motion for second reading of Bill 146, An Act to protect Farming and Food Production / Projet de loi 146, Loi protégeant l'agriculture et la production alimentaire.

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex South): It's a pleasure for me to rise tonight to say a few words on Bill 146. I want to give a bit of historical background as to what led up to this bill, and also a bit of historical perspective from my own personal viewpoint. You might be interested to know that in starting to wear bow ties in this place, this evening I am wearing a bow tie that was once worn by Lester B. Pearson in the 1962 federal election. When I wear this tie, I feel inspired, so I hope I can do justice to it tonight, although I certainly wouldn't be able to do quite the eloquent job that Lester B. Pearson could do.

Hon Rob Sampson (Minister without Portfolio [Privatization]): The same tie?

Mr Crozier: The very same tie that Lester B. Pearson had worn, yes. It was given to me recently by Delroy Prescott from Manitoulin. It was found in a box of a relative of his after he had died and there was a note with it that this was Mr Pearson's tie. They didn't know who they could give it to to wear, so now I'm wearing it.

Interjection.

Mr Crozier: My colleague from Essex-Kent wants me to pass it on to him so he can then say he's worn a tie worn by Bruce Crozier. Isn't that great?

Anyway, to the debate. Bill 146, An Act to protect Farming and Food Production, is a bill that's very important to the agricultural industry in the province and to my riding of Essex South, which is the southern half of Essex county.

We know, for example, in the report of the Mike Harris task force on rural and economic development, that the government would introduce amendments that would ensure farmers retain the ability to operate without fear of nuisance lawsuits. They pledged to work with all major

farm organizations to produce amendments which are fair and reasonable, and that, I suspect, has resulted in Bill 146.

The only thing is, on a bill of this importance, it's a little surprising to me that it has taken from 1995 to some two and a half years later before it was introduced. In fact, it's being introduced at the very 11th hour of this sitting of the Legislature. I want the members of the Legislature to know that the first reading of this bill was on June 26, 1997. We started second reading on September 3, some three months after it was first introduced, and now we are another three months down the road and we are finally debating Bill 146.

I would also want the members of the Legislature to be reminded that my colleague from Essex-Kent, on December 3, almost a month ago, pointed out to the Legislature in a statement that he wondered why this bill, since it was brought forward on June 26, 1997, and brought forward for second reading on September 24 — the question was, why has it taken so long? Our caucus has agreed to facilitate the passage of this bill, so we wondered what the problem was. Why does it have to be handled so late in this legislative calendar? Of course, we have many new amalgamated municipalities that are coming into effect on January 1, 1998. I believe one of the members of his own caucus brought up in the Legislature earlier this month that this type of legislation should be brought forward.

I also want to point out the importance of agriculture to my riding and to the broader area of Essex county, in which I've lived all my life, and the importance of the agrifood industry. In our county alone, it creates over 6,000 jobs, with over \$40 million in wages. In Essex county alone, we grow over \$200 million worth of field, vegetable, greenhouse and fruit crops, and we have a greater agricultural output than any one of the Atlantic provinces, as some comparison.

The agrifood industry has become a \$400-million industry in the province, second in economic importance only to the automotive industry. It would interest some of the members, I'm sure, to know that in the way of field crops, soybeans, winter wheat and grain corn are planted on 93% of the agricultural land in Essex county.

The greenhouse industry is a fast-growing industry in Essex South. Essex county is the largest and most intensive greenhouse vegetable growing area in Canada, and we are approaching 500 acres under glass and plastic. There are also 10 acres of mushroom houses in Essex county.

When it comes to processing vegetables, of course my hometown, Leamington, is the home of the H.J. Heinz Co in Canada. It's been an important agricultural industry in my area all my life, and in fact since 1907. It's a leader in the food processing industry.

Field vegetables: Essex county is the province's earliest source of fresh vegetables because of the temperate climate, our southerly location and the fact that we're surrounded on three sides by water.

In the area of fruit crops, nearly 200 growers are involved in the production of Essex county's diverse fruit crops.

Livestock, dairy and poultry are also thriving industries in Essex county. We have over 28 dairy farmers in the county.

Fishing — and fish processing, which is a related industry; some think it's the agricultural industry of the sea — is also located in the county.

We have honey, Christmas trees, popping corn, maple syrup, deer and rabbit farming.

So Essex county is a very diverse area, and we're very proud of that.

More to the bill and the fact that we are supporting this bill, we want to just point out that we find it interesting that in the fall of 1984, the current minister voted against right-to-farm legislation, albeit it was a private member's bill at that time in the name of Mr Jack Riddell, who later was an agriculture minister in the province. The bill contained a section allowing the minister to set guidelines on normal farming practices. This section was to provide a mechanism to determine what was normal and what was abnormal.

In 1984, Jack Riddell recognized the need for legislation such as this, but the current minister for some reason was opposed. From the debate on the bill, the comment was that section 3 of the bill concerned the now agriculture minister in that it gives the minister absolute power over all of agriculture, which should not occur. We certainly don't want to see any absolute powers of the minister misused in this bill, and I would hope they would not be.

1840

Also, section 10 of this bill, when it comes to powers of the minister, allows him to unilaterally define the nature of farm operations that qualify under the earlier general definition of normal farm practices, including additional crops and activities, and "limits, expansions or clarifications of activities described within the definition." The existing legislation does not give this ability to the minister to specifically define agricultural practices, but the minister now, I assume after consultation with farm organizations and municipalities, feels the Minister of Agriculture should have this kind of power and responsibility.

The compendium notes to the bill say that the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs may issue directives in relation to agricultural operations or normal farm practices, or may adopt in whole or in part any directives, guidelines or policy statements prescribed under other pieces of legislation by other ministries. Any decision

made by the Farm Practices Protection Board must be consistent with prescribed directives and statements. This provision should ensure that other government priorities and policies are maintained and respected.

We know that farms are increasing in size in the province. Again, for example, in Essex county in 1981 there were 3,088 farms that covered an acreage of 349,345 acres. In 1991 there are some 800 fewer farms and the acreage is down about 19,000 acres, so the size of the farms has increased. I suppose that's for a number of reasons. With farm prices not always keeping up with inflation, many in the agrifood industry have found that a larger operation can be more productive, and consequently we find fewer farmers working larger acreages.

With these farms expanding, I agree with and suggest that the reason for this bill protecting farming and food production is for that reason: that farms are able to grow in size, because when they do, it may be inevitable, but it happens that there are sometimes concerns with neighbours and the practices of farming. We want to be able to make sure that with those who move from small urban or large urban areas into the farm area, for reasons usually of quality of life, that won't affect the ability of farmers to carry out their chosen field, so to speak.

As I said, farms are increasing in size, and producers are specializing in the choice of commodity that they want to specialize in.

As I mentioned earlier, the greenhouse industry is one of these areas. It's an expanding agricultural component of Ontario. I know the minister has visited greenhouses in southern Ontario and in fact in Essex county. They are large, efficient, highly productive operations. I visit practically every one of these because, as they expand, I'm interested in their future. I think you'll agree that it's quite interesting and marvellous to see tomatoes growing on plants that are 20 or 30 feet long and to see greenhouse operations that cover 25 to 30 acres in size.

Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming): It's a beautiful sight.

Mr Crozier: My colleague from Timiskaming, a former agriculture minister, says it's a beautiful sight, and I agree with him of course.

The investment in agriculture, as we all know, is indeed a large and a high-risk venture. We know that market fluctuations exist and in some cases can make or break a farm operation. I was in a retail lumber business for some 22 years and I think I can say that I appreciate the investment that farmers have to make in their operation: the capital investment, the annual operating costs they have.

Unlike a business that's more or less housed in a series of buildings, the weather obviously can have a great deal of effect on farming, as well as the type of marketing and pricing they have to contend with. I can remember in 1986, I think it was, we had a significant hailstorm in the Essex county area that caused millions of dollars in damage in the greenhouse industry and in some cases almost ruined them. The fruit industry is another one that is highly affected by weather.

In spite of the debate and further adoption of this act, we all realize that farmers have always tried to appease their neighbours. They have always tried to do what is right for the community as a whole, and often this is done at some cost. Shifting from one type of grain drying, for example, or another type of facility that increases their productivity but improves their farm operation and improves their relationship with neighbours is often a step that farmers take without any encouragement from anyone, just because they realize that it's the right thing to do.

But in any society or in any one group within society, there may be a few who disregard those around them and the rights of those around them. That's why legislators must bring forth laws that have regulations and guidelines for many situations, not just with agriculture. We find this in the broad spectrum of industry and business. Examples could be those who choose to drive too fast on highways, and we have laws for that. My colleague from Essex-Kent often reminds us that we must have laws for those who pass school buses when lights are flashing. He has a very good private member's bill that's still on the order paper that should be passed because it would enable us to identify those vehicles that offend and in the end would save lives.

Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East): I agree.

Mr Crozier: I have agreement from the government side. We have to get agreement from a few more than just you, but we appreciate those comments.

Through this bill, we need to address legitimate complaints regarding farm practices, but we must also allow for normal farm practices to take place. We need to be able to deal with those complaints that may be of a frivolous nature, and when those complaints do come forward, we need to develop a dispute resolution process to deal with the legitimate complaints. This bill, I am very hopeful, will do just that.

There are occasions when personalities intervene in these situations and we have to have an arm's-length body that will deal with them. This act, of course, has been expanded to include and bring about some help to the farm community in the area of these types of complaints, and it has been expanded to include odour, noise, dust, light, smoke and vibration. These are welcome changes.

In summary, I just want to say that I think we all in this Legislature realize the right of farmers to carry out their chosen occupation. We think they should be able to do that without any frivolous intervention. The minister has reminded us, as any of us who live particularly in small rural areas realize, of the importance of the agrifood business to Ontario. Those in the city should realize, again as the minister has often reminded us, that if it were not for the farmers of the province and the high-quality food they produce and their ability for high productivity to make them competitive — that it's the agrifood industry in Ontario that, along with some other provinces, helps feed not only our province but our nation and the world at large. We see the benefit of this bill and hope that after its eventual passage it will prove to be an aid to the farm community in the province.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Questions or comments? Further debate?

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): I'm pleased to participate in this debate, and in participating in this debate I want to first just review a bit of history in terms of this legislation.

The irony of being here on the next-to-last night of the Legislature and now debating this legislation is something that has to be commented on. This bill was introduced into the Legislature on June 26. The Legislature sat through most of August, the Legislature sat through September, but the bill was not called for debate until September 24, and then for only two hours. Despite the fact that the bill was introduced in June, it was not called again by the government until September 24, for two hours of debate.

The House sat through most of October, it sat through most of November, and now here we are into December and it is only on the next-to-last night that the government calls this bill for debate again. I have to tell you that when we saw the government's list of priority legislation earlier this week, this bill wasn't even there. We received a letter from the government House leader, and he listed things like the fuels tax, he listed things like Bill 164 —

Hon Noble Villeneuve (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, minister responsible for francophone affairs): We waited for you.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): What a silly comment. It's on the list because of us, not because of you.

Mr Hampton: He listed things like the two red tape bills. This piece of legislation was not even on the government's priority list.

Hon Mr Villeneuve: We waited for Howie.

The Acting Speaker: Minister, order.

Mr Hampton: When we informed the Ontario Federation of Agriculture yesterday that this was not even on the government's priority list, I gather some telephone calls were made, and I gather now that the government is going to allow some time for this bill to be debated. So we are thankful at this very late hour, after the government spent all kinds of hours debating Bill 136 and then after — what was it? — five days of debate decided maybe they didn't want to do Bill 136 anyway and so went back and readjusted it and we debated it some more; after the government spent days — nay, weeks — on Bill 160; after the government has spent all kinds of time in this Legislature with one time allocation motion after another dealing with other pieces of legislation, in the last 24 hours of the House the government rediscovers Bill 146, the Farming and Food Production Protection Act. We're glad that finally the government recognizes that it does have some obligation to farmers in this province, even at this very late hour.

I want to talk about just the general context of this piece of legislation, because sometimes with legislation, context is everything. I want to talk about what's happening to rural representation in this Legislature.

The government is going to reduce the number of seats in this Legislature from 130 to 103, and people need to

know that of the 27 seats that are going to disappear, 20 of them are rural constituencies, that the people who live and work in rural Ontario will in the next Legislature have the least representation, the lowest representation ever in the history of rural residents in this province. While people who live in rural Ontario and who work in rural Ontario contribute substantially to this province's economy, in terms of the representation they will have in this Legislature, in terms of the voice they will have in this Legislature, never before in the history of the province has it been or will it be so low.

But it doesn't end there. It doesn't just end in the number of rural constituencies which will disappear in Ontario. It goes far beyond that. Just a while ago this government, in its omniscient wisdom, sent a commissioner to Chatham-Kent, to the city of Chatham and the surrounding Kent county. The reason the commissioner was sent there, we are told, is that he was going to make government simpler. What did this commissioner do under the direction of the Minister of Municipal Affairs? This commissioner essentially did away with all of the rural municipalities in the county of Kent — did away with all of them.

Now what you have in Chatham-Kent is essentially one government for the city of Chatham and all of the rural municipalities. But guess where the population is. Guess where the power is. Guess where the decision-making is going to be. It's going to be in the city of Chatham. The city of Chatham now will make all the decisions for those rural residents, for those farmers who live in Kent county.

When this decision was brought down, I have to refer to the remarks of the Minister of Municipal Affairs, because his remarks were essentially this: that people in rural Ontario had better pay attention to this. People in rural Ontario had better understand that a whole bunch of rural municipalities are going to be removed in Ontario.

I would suggest that the only reason more municipalities in rural Ontario haven't developed already is because the government recognizes that in about 16 months, 18 months, it will have to have an election. It has started to understand that if it goes out there and continues to eliminate the voice of rural Ontario, if it continues to do away with rural municipalities and fold them into large cities or large urban municipal councils, it will be in political trouble.

But I think people in rural Ontario had better know that that is the direction of this government, that is the stated direction of the Minister of Municipal Affairs and the stated direction of the Premier: to do away with the municipal voice of rural Ontario in this province. The government has started on that, and I would suggest they are merely hesitating in doing it further because they recognize that a provincial election will have to happen very soon.

There is one other piece of context that I want to talk about, one other bit of context that I think people need to understand. The Minister of Municipal Affairs brought down the downloading numbers just a few days ago. They said it was going to be revenue-neutral. In fact, right off

the top it is a \$560-million download on to property taxpayers across the province.

Much has been made of the fact that \$163 million of that will fall on Toronto, and the rest will fall elsewhere in the province. But what people had better understand, and people had better go back and read the fine print of that downloading announcement, is that what the government has done is split the downloading into two parts.

The first part, the \$560-million part, happens now. They put in place a special transition fund — that's what they call it, a special transition fund — which will last two years. But in two years, that special transition fund disappears, and the downloading that will happen then will be even greater than \$560 million.

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Guess who gets hit in the second whack. Yes, Toronto got hit in the first whack to the tune of \$163 million. Who gets hit in the second whack? Who gets hit the hardest? Rural and northern Ontario communities get hit the hardest in the second whack. The big property tax increase now may be in Toronto, but two years from now, after the next provincial election, the big property tax increase is going to be in rural Ontario.

These are all useful in terms of setting context. What I believe is happening is, rural Ontario is losing its voice here in the Legislature, because as I indicated, 20 of the seats that are disappearing are rural seats. Rural Ontario is losing its voice in terms of local decision-making, because the government is hell-bent to consolidate and amalgamate rural municipalities into larger urban packages, and we know when that happens that the decisions will be made by the far greater number of urban residents. The government is hell-bent to download when the final numbers are in, two years from now, \$1 billion on to municipalities, and substantial property tax increases are going to fall on rural municipalities once that special transition fund runs out in two years. That's the context now in which this bill is happening.

What is in this bill and what should we be focusing on?

First off, let's acknowledge that this is really a re-writing of the existing Farm Practices Protection Act. It expands a few categories that are in the existing farm protection act. I think we should make note of those. Many of the so-called categories that are being expanded have been the subject of complaints or have been the subject of hearings since the initial act was passed, and some of them are frankly nuisances.

Let's get down to what's added. The bill includes an expanded definition of "agricultural operation." It adds fur-bearing animals. In terms of the diversity of agriculture that we're trying to promote, that's good. It includes the culturing and growing of fish. As the Minister of Natural Resources who played some part in that, I think this is a good idea too, that we promote aquaculture out there and we take aquaculture out of some of the strict regulations that have existed in the past.

Game animals are included. Frankly, we know that some animals that have been classified as game animals in

the past are now being produced on farms, and there seems to be a market. And there are game birds.

It adds maple syrup, it adds sod production, it adds tobacco and it adds pre-farm operations. I don't think anyone would have any disagreement with those. Most of us would agree that those things were implicitly acknowledged in the past and ought to be explicitly acknowledged now.

The bill includes, as I said, changes to the definition of "normal farm practice." I want to deal with this, I want to dwell on this just a bit here, because here is where there has been some disagreement between the Ontario Federation of Agriculture and the minister. The Ontario Federation of Agriculture wanted to use the term "accepted"; in other words, the bill talks about and defines "normal farm practices" and uses the definition "conducted in a manner consistent with proper and accepted customs and standards." That's the language the OFA wanted. What the government has done is they have changed "accepted" to "acceptable." Some folks may say, "'Accepted' to 'acceptable' is not a great change; we won't worry about that." I think people ought to spend some time thinking about that.

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): Do you want to delay it for six months, have a bunch of hearings?

Mr Wildman: Why didn't you call it before this? You wasted time.

Hon Mr Harris: You don't even know what a farm looks like.

Mr Gilles Pouliot (Lake Nipigon): Give it a rest, Mike. They don't have 18 holes on them. Turn every farm into a golf course.

The Acting Speaker: Order. The member for Nipigon.

Mr Hampton: I gather from the Premier's comments that he would like to explain how it is that the government introduced this bill on June 26, didn't call it again for any debate until September 26 —

Hon Mr Villeneuve: We were waiting for you.

The Acting Speaker: Minister.

Mr Wildman: What a stupid comment.

Mr Hampton: — called it for two hours of debate, and now here we sit, close to December 22 —

Mr Wildman: Since when did you wait for us to do anything?

The Acting Speaker: Member for Algoma.

Mr Hampton: — and is only now calling it again. Maybe the Premier would like to explain why there was absolutely no priority on this bill, why the government didn't consider it a priority at all, and now when we get down to the last few hours, suddenly the government rediscovers it. In fact, Premier, you can explain why earlier in the week it wasn't even on your House leader's priority list, why, when caucuses met on Tuesday morning, this bill, Bill 146, was not on your House leader's priority list for legislation to be passed before the House prorogues tomorrow evening. Premier, if you want to explain that, we give you the chance. In fact, we welcome your comment.

Hon Mr Harris: Nobody believes you. That's the explanation.

The Acting Speaker: Order. I would advise the people on that side, the government side, you'll have a chance to rebut. In the meantime, be patient. The leader of the third party.

Mr Hampton: Speaker, I think what we'll have to do is take the government House leader's letter and make it available for everyone so they can read it. If the Premier wants to say that I am not telling the truth, we'll make the government House leader's letter available to everyone and people can read it for themselves.

I want to go on because, as I say, there are some important pieces to this legislation that I think need to be looked at, and looked at carefully. The fact of the matter is, when you produce legislation like this and you know that this legislation will be the subject of tribunal hearings, when you know that this legislation will be utilized to deal with disputes, you want to be sure what the legal definition of the word "acceptable" will be. You want to be sure how it will be interpreted.

Again, the reason I think this is important is because if you look at the farm practices protection legislation in Saskatchewan and British Columbia — Saskatchewan I think is relevant here; it's a very large farming jurisdiction — they use the term "accepted." They do not use the term "acceptable." There is a fair amount of legal jurisprudence around the word "accepted." There's a fair amount of certainty around the word "accepted" — what it means, what it includes and what it doesn't include.

I think the minister, before we are done, should stand on his feet here and give an explanation as to why the government wants to use the word "acceptable" rather than the word "accepted," which was put forward by the Ontario Federation of Agriculture and is used currently in Saskatchewan and used currently in British Columbia. I think you owe it to the OFA, you owe it to the farmers of this province, to explain in detail why you want to use the word "acceptable" and not the word "accepted," which has a legal definition in this context, is used in other provinces and was preferred by the Ontario Federation of Agriculture.

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There are some other issues that I think also need to be discussed about this bill, but we said to the government that we wanted this put on, we wanted this brought forward, we wanted to have an opportunity for discussion here, we wanted the opportunity to finish second reading debate on this, so I'm going to save my further comments until some later time.

But again, I want to say very clearly that you must put this bill in context. This is a government that has done away with almost all the land use provisions in this province. This is a government that is essentially throwing rural Ontario open to every developer who has a wallet and is willing to spend money. This is a government that has very clearly given a signal that it intends to do away with many of the rural municipalities and their capacity to

make decisions on behalf of the rural residents they represent.

This is a government that I predict, because they have decided to throw land use open, they have decided to throw open agricultural land to developers, is going to increase the conflict between development in rural Ontario and farmers in rural Ontario: inevitable. All you have to do is look at where other jurisdictions have said: "We're not going to put in place land use guidelines to protect farm land; we're going to let the market rule. If a developer wants to move out and he has the money and he has the moxie and he has the will, he can move in." When that happens, you inevitably create all kinds of conflicts between those people who farm and those people who want to develop, and ultimately between rural residents who are not interested in farming, who are interested in urban development, urban lifestyle, and farmers. That's what this government has done.

I look at how they have dealt with the farm tax rebate, and I put that in this context. The message that's out there, because I hear it — I get phone calls; when I'm out there in small-town Ontario, I hear it. What the government has done around the farm tax rebate is again set the fox among the pigeons, because the message that's being translated is that the local residents will have to now pick up the farm tax rebate.

You're going to see two things. You're going to have to see a general tax increase out there, both on the farm residents and on other rural residents, in order to handle the farm tax rebate, and you're already getting complaints about that. You're getting complaints from rural residents who are saying, "I don't want to pay a higher property tax rate to compensate for the loss of the farm tax rebate," or, if you want to put it another way, to compensate for the rejigging of the farm tax rebate. This government has really set the cat among the pigeons on this.

Now the government brings this in at a very late date and wants to say that this legislation will solve the whole picture. I don't think that's true. I think people need to reflect on that, and I think people need to reflect on the fact that the government was in no hurry to bring this legislation forward, that this legislation wasn't even on the government House leader's priority list for the last three days of the Legislature. I think if people do that, they'll get a better context for what is actually happening here.

I'm pleased to put these comments on the record for second reading, and I hope the Minister of Agriculture will have an opportunity now to speak to some of the issues that have been raised by members around the Legislature.

The Acting Speaker: Questions or comments?

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I was very interested to hear the member for Rainy River discuss this matter, and I wanted to add a bit to the context of what he has said. Indeed, we have been waiting for a long period of time for this bill to be called for consideration by this House. The government always had some other bills that were much more important to them.

For instance, back in June of this year there was a large chunk of time where we could have dealt with a number of bills such as this if the government had wanted to bring them forward, but the government was busy trying to change the rules of this House. We spent a number of days because the people in the Premier's office, the people who really run the government, insisted that they wanted to change the rules so the government could easily put through any legislation it wanted to put through.

Even after having spent its time changing the procedures in this Legislature to restrict and minimize debate and to remove from members of the opposition any levers we might have to influence legislation, even after doing that, the government still refused to bring forward Bill 146, which deals with an important matter, particularly to those who reside in the rural areas of the province and especially to those who are members of the farming community.

When I hear it said that somehow it is always the other side, the opposition, who control this House, I can assure all who might be watching that the government, whenever it wishes to do so, imposes a time allocation motion, and in fact earlier this week took five bills in one and swished them through the House with one stroke of the pen, with one short debate.

This was obviously not a priority.

Mr Wildman: I'm pleased to rise to comment on the remarks of the member for Rainy River on Bill 146 and to point out that the context in which he put the debate was very important. I'm pleased to see members of the OFA executive in the gallery tonight, including Ron Bonnet from my riding. I'm very pleased to see that. I hope they all understand, as my leader indicated, that two days ago in the discussions among the House leaders, Bill 146 was not a priority for the government House leader, that it wasn't on his priority list, that it wouldn't have been called; it would have died on the order paper and the agricultural community would have had to start over again in the spring.

Thank goodness we were able to persuade the government House leader that he shouldn't do that. I'm glad I was able to help the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs in persuading his own colleague of the error of his ways in not calling Bill 146. I'm pleased that because of our intervention, we are now debating Bill 146 and it will pass second reading and it will have the support of all three parties. I'm very pleased about that, because I did not want to see this die on the order paper because the Conservative government has other priorities and doesn't care about rural Ontario.

I think it's important that issues that have been raised are properly aired. I'm pleased that the government House leader has suggested that we will have hearings in the intersession and that we will be able to pass this at third reading in the spring by carrying it over into the next session. I'm glad that all three parties have agreed to that, that we will be able to carry it over and that this bill will not die on the order paper and that the interests of the farm

community and rural Ontario will be met because of the efforts of all three parties in this House.

The Acting Speaker: Now it's your turn if you wish to comment, the government side. Questions or comments? No? The member for Essex-Kent.

Mr Pat Hoy (Essex-Kent): As the minister will know, I spoke back in September to this bill and gave our presentation as we viewed it.

I also want to mention to the government that since May, 56 bills have been discussed in this House, 56 bills have been brought forward, and here we are at this late juncture in our sitting and we're still dealing with Bill 146. On behalf of our party, I would ask that we have unanimous consent to go into third reading of this bill without delay.

The Acting Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? No. Further questions or comments?

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order. Stop the clock.

The member for Fort York.

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Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): I want to comment briefly on the comments made by our leader, the member for Rainy River. Context, in my view, is always something that is very important to me, and it should be to those who are watching, because that gives you a good sense of where we are coming from and where the government is coming from.

Our leader spoke about the reduction of seats, 20 of which will come from the rural areas, as a result of which, I add, their voice is diminished. It is inevitable that when you eliminate 20 seats from rural communities, their voices are diminished. I never saw le ministre de l'Agriculture come up to the defence of the loss of those seats. Not once did he speak, as he did in the past, for a voice for those rural communities. Now they got rid of 20 of them.

Further, our leader talked about the issue of Chatham-Kent, where Dr Meyboom came. I call him Dr Doom, because in spite of what rural communities in Kent said, he imposed an amalgamation on those communities that was fought vociferously by many councillors and many of the residents of those communities.

Our leader speaks about the downloading effect of over half a billion dollars on property owners and the serious effect that is going to have on individuals and families as people struggle to deal with property tax increases or decreases of services.

I add as a last comment, the Minister of Agriculture said to our leader, "We were waiting for you," to deal with this issue of Bill 146. Imagine the government members saying to our leader, "Our Highness, we were waiting for you." You've got the numbers and the wheels. You deal with it.

The Acting Speaker: The leader of the third party, you have two minutes.

Mr Hampton: I only want to say this: It is passing strange indeed that the government has a huge majority — they have 82 out of 130 members — and they can't man-

age their own Legislature. They can't manage the Legislature in which they have a majority. So we find ourselves here at the 11th hour getting in a couple of hours of debate on a bill that was debated for the first time for only two hours back in September.

The government has to figure out how they want to manage their legislative agenda, why it is that they want to use time allocation to whistle five bills through here in the space of a couple of hours, and yet they had absolutely no time for this piece of legislation until the 11th hour.

I thank members on all sides of the House for their comments and I hope we will hear from someone, either the parliamentary assistant or perhaps someone else the minister designates, who can hopefully help us address, either here or later on tomorrow, some of the issues that have been raised.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Ted Arnott (Wellington): It's a pleasure for me to have the opportunity to speak tonight with respect to Bill 146, An Act to protect Farming and Food Production.

Hon Mr Villeneuve: Yeah, let's get it over with.

Mr Arnott: I would like to also acknowledge and welcome the members of the OFA who are joining with us tonight to watch the debate. Thank you very much for coming.

Bill 146 is crucial to protecting farmers' ability to continue producing an abundant supply of wholesome, high-quality, affordable food and other agricultural products for Ontario and for our world markets. It reasserts this government's commitment to agriculture and food production as a vibrant, competitive and growing sector that annually contributes \$25 billion to the provincial economy, employs more than 600,000 people and creates more jobs every year, and exports products worth well over \$5 billion annually to the far reaches of the globe.

In order to continue feeding all of us as well as to create the new jobs that we need and the economic growth —

Mr Wildman: Why didn't you call it before and quit acting like silly buggers?

The Acting Speaker: The member for Wellington has the floor.

Mr Arnott: — our farmers need assurances that they can conduct their normal business practices without fear of nuisance lawsuits and unnecessarily restrictive bylaws.

Hon Mr Harris: The reason we agreed was because you couldn't have 12 members here tonight. Tell the truth.

The Acting Speaker: Premier, order please.

Mr Wildman: Go ahead and do what you have to do. Do whatever you like.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Algoma, order, please.

The member for Wellington.

Mr Arnott: While we do have a law in place that provides this kind of protection, it is limited, out of date, and no longer entirely effective. In the 10 years since the Farm Practices Protection Act was introduced, the population mix in rural Ontario has changed, with more urban people moving into our rural areas. New and innovative kinds of farming are being introduced involving non-traditional

livestock and crops. Modern normal farming practices include activities not covered under the current legislation, and on-farm activities in which farmers add value to the commodities they grow are increasing.

Times have changed, and the current act has not changed with them. Before this government was elected, we went out and talked to farmers and rural residents. This legislation was one of their key concerns. They told us that the protection provided in the old legislation was simply inadequate. The legislation didn't cover a number of modern farming activities, it didn't apply to new, innovative farming operations that were starting up all over the province, and there was concern about increasing conflict over restrictive bylaws.

We made a pledge then that we would put into place a law that was more in step with the times should we form the government: a law that protected the rights of farmers using normal farming practices to continue raising the food products we all use without having to resort to unnecessary, time-consuming and costly litigation, a law that would protect Ontario's ability, both now and in future generations, to maintain a growing, thriving, job-creating agrifood sector.

The bill before us today does this and much, much more. It balances the rights of those who conduct their farming businesses in rural Ontario with the rights of all those who live in rural Ontario. It adheres to our strong health, safety and environmental standards. It is forward-looking, providing much-needed protection for today's farmers and for generations to come. And it builds on the tremendous environmental work that's been done by farmers and farm organizations over the past 10 years.

There's a real sense of community in small-town and rural Ontario. Neighbours generally get along and help each other out. That's why so many of us have decided to make the move from the streets of Toronto or London or Ottawa to the concession roads of Durham or Middlesex or Lanark or Wellington. But make no mistake: For farmers, it's also a place of business, with all the challenges and all the opportunities this entails.

The business of farming has evolved rapidly over the years. In the year 1900, each farmer fed only about 12 people on average, and about 50 cents of every consumer dollar earned was spent on food. With growing populations, farmers have been called upon to boost their productivity over the years, and they've responded. Today the average farmer feeds more than 120 people, more than 10 times the number at the turn of the century, and our food prices are among the world's lowest, with food costing less than 13 cents of every dollar earned.

Fewer than 3% of Canadians today operate farms, yet they produce enough food and other commodities, such as herbs for pharmaceuticals, flowers, flax for fibre, and feedstock for alternative fuels, to supply most of the domestic and many export markets around the world.

Let's not forget that they accomplish all of this in an environmentally sensible and responsible way. Farmers are the original environmentalists. They more than anyone know the importance of taking care of our air, our water

and our soil. These elements are literally the lifelines for farmers. They more than anyone understand that you need a productive, safe and healthy environment for the future. That's the first step in the production of wholesome, high-quality food. It's also a driving force for some non-farm commodities like ethanol. It's what consumers demand and, as important, it's what farmers expect of themselves.

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That's why farmers and farm groups invest their time and money in many initiatives aimed at protecting the environment. Besides environmental farm plans, there are countless projects involving millions of farmers' hard-earned dollars aimed at such things as reducing pesticide use, improving tilling practices, developing more efficient manure management practices, and erosion control. Farmers see these projects as investments both in the environment and in their business. For farmers, the two are connected at the most basic level.

I think we can all agree that creating a climate in which farmers can continue to provide us with high-quality, affordable food without unnecessary restrictions is a worthy goal.

I would like to thank the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario, the Rural Ontario Municipal Association — ROMA — and the many commodity groups who contributed tremendously both to the consultation leading up to this bill and to its development. I would also like to thank the rural residents who took the time to share their concerns and issues. They helped us immensely in bringing balance to this legislation. Many of those suggestions are incorporated in the bill that we have before the House today.

I believe, and I think most of my honourable colleagues would agree, that the bill does what we have set out to do, strengthening the protection of farming and food production while keeping it in harmony with health, safety and our environment. The proposed act provides added protection for farmers without overriding or duplicating other legislation and policies designed to protect the Ontario public.

Farmers have said again and again that their interest in strengthening this legislation is so that they can get on with their day-to-day operations. They have said emphatically that they do not want a licence to pollute. Therefore, the new law would continue to be subject to the provincial Environmental Protection Act, the Pesticides Act, the Health Protection and Promotion Act and the Ontario Water Resources Act. Further, it would adhere to cabinet-approved policy statements. Farmers understand thoroughly the need to have these safeguards in place. That's why they have wholeheartedly agreed with these provisions.

At the same time, the proposed act deals constructively with the emerging concerns around unduly restrictive municipal bylaws. Before its implementation, the ministry, farm groups and municipalities will be working together to increase awareness among municipal decision-makers about modern farming practices. Under the new law, the minister would be able to issue farm practices policy

statements which can be used by municipalities as guidelines in developing their bylaws. At the same time, a public awareness program would focus on the realities of living in rural Ontario. This would be accomplished in cooperation with farm and rural groups and real estate agents.

We have to do a better job of informing people who move to rural areas that farms are also places of business, where sometimes the crop can't wait until after the week-end to be harvested, where at the height of the season, greenhouse operators may have to run their lights all night long, where weather conditions mean that farm machinery during some periods could be running 24 hours a day. We must also do a better job of reminding everyone that Ontario's economic roots are firmly planted in our farmers' fields and that we all depend on the healthy, wholesome and affordable food supply and all the other non-food products that we grow that come from those fields and farms.

I know that in Wellington, many farmers already regularly advise their neighbours when they need to combine or to spread manure on an adjacent field. Often the timing of these activities can be worked out to everyone's satisfaction. If this doesn't or can't happen, staff of OMAFRA are knowledgeable and adept at helping mediate resolutions between neighbours before disputes can escalate.

In the interests of time, I'm going to move now to my conclusion.

This government has encouraged and will continue to encourage a strong agrifood sector and rural economy. We're doing it today with the second reading of this timely and much-needed Farming and Food Production Protection Act. I believe, and I think all members can agree, that it achieves a balance between protecting the rights of those who farm in rural Ontario with all those who live in rural Ontario.

As with this legislation, we'll continue working with the people of Ontario who contribute so much to our high standard of living on several other initiatives. We'll forge ahead with research and technology advances, explore new markets here at home and around the globe, and boost investment and competitiveness throughout the province. We'll do our utmost to assist rural communities to reach their full potential as full participants in the bright economic future that lies ahead for Ontario. Most of all, we will continue to create a climate in which those who produce our food and those who consume it can go on reaping the rewards of one of our most highly respected and vital industries, because when the agrifood industry does well, everyone in Ontario benefits.

The Acting Speaker: Questions or comments?

Mr Hoy: We know the farm community has always tried to appease their neighbours. They have always tried to do what is best for the whole community. I might add that this was done at some cost as they changed their operations to meet the needs required to maintain the best interests of the whole community. But in any society, or within any one group within that society, there may be a few who disregard those around them and the rights of

those same people. That is why we as legislators must bring forth laws, regulations, guidelines for many situations, not just for agriculture, but in many regards throughout many ministries.

We need to develop a Farming and Food Production Protection Act to meet the needs of an industry that is ever-changing and one that I expect will continue to change to meet the needs of new technologies and to meet the needs of the new demographics that we experience today in rural Ontario. We need to address legitimate complaints regarding normal farm practices, but we must allow for normal farm practices to take place. We need to develop a dispute resolution process to deal with those same legitimate complaints and also to deal with those that are frivolous. There are occasions when personalities intervene in these situations and it's difficult to resolve what is occurring between those two parties, so we need a dispute resolution process for both the legitimate complaints and the frivolous.

This act has been expanded to include odour, noise, dust, light and vibration. It is a required change and a welcome change.

Mr Wildman: I want to congratulate my friend from Wellington for his reasoned intervention in the debate. He always approaches these issues in an evenhanded and sensible manner, and I appreciate his comments.

We do need this legislation, and all members in the House support the passage of the bill as it amends the current legislation. As he indicated, there are many people moving to rural Ontario because of the tremendous advantages that those of us who live in rural Ontario and the farming communities understand there to be for raising children and for perhaps living in your retirement or simply living there and commuting to the urban centres to work. This does lead to disputes and, as my friend from Essex-Kent indicated, sometimes nuisance complaints about farm operations. That's why this legislation is useful, in that it will make it possible for those kinds of disputes to be dealt with in a way that will make it possible for normal farm practices to be carried out.

As someone who lives in a rural area and has a very good friend and neighbour who is involved in a large dairy operation, I know that his operations sometimes cause some discomfort for his neighbours, but those of us who are not involved in farming and who moved into that neighbourhood understood that when we moved there. It was helpful for me personally that I was familiar with farming, but some others were not, and perhaps they didn't understand what is necessary in a farm operation. This bill will help make it possible for those farm practices to be continued and the disputes to be resolved.

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Mr Gilchrist: I'll keep my comments very brief. As an operator of a farm myself for 20 years now as a sidelight to our main business, I'm looking forward to the passage of this bill. I just want to put on the record again how pleased I am and proud of the comments from our colleague from Wellington, who once again has stood up and passionately defended the interests of farmers in his riding

and across Ontario. I congratulate him for his ongoing efforts on behalf of that important aspect of our economy.

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): I'd like to comment on the fine speech of my friend the member for Wellington. I was one of the few members around here, I think, who back in 1988 participated in the first right-to-farm act brought forward by Jack Riddell. I remember those hearings, but I also recognize, as all members recognize, that over those years there has been considerable change not only in the farming community, but in the number of people who are moving into the farming community.

I'm pleased today to have the opportunity to stand and support this act and just to say that although the government has been quite tardy in bringing this forward, it has been the position of my party that we should have this in place for January 1 and that we should proceed with this as quickly and as expediently as possible in order to have this legislation in place not only for the people who are farming, but also for municipalities, many of which are facing amalgamation about that time. They are going to need this kind of legislation in place with some certainty so they know how their bylaws will apply with regard to farms.

I'm just standing today to offer my support and to say to the government that although you have been very tardy at this, we are fully supportive of attempting to have this in place by January 1.

Mr Arnott: I'm pleased to thank the members who made comments relating to my speech. I compliment the member for Essex-Kent on the constructive approach that he is taking to this issue in working with the government. Thank you very much. To the member for Algoma, who listened intently to most of my speech, I saw across the floor, I appreciate that and thank him for his reasoned intervention and his response to my speech. The farmer from Scarborough East, my colleague Mr Gilchrist, I thank also for his approach, and the member for Algoma-Manitoulin, who mentioned Jack Riddell, a former Minister of Agriculture whom I remember fairly well.

It's interesting. This month we all think about our own anniversaries. It was 10 years ago this month that I started working for Jack Johnson, the former member for Wellington, so I'm celebrating an anniversary too. I remember Jack Riddell very well as a fine Minister of Agriculture.

I want to compliment our Minister of Agriculture, though, who farmers increasingly tell me is the finest minister since Bill Stewart, so we're very pleased to have his participation within our caucus.

I was very pleased that this bill was introduced in Wellington county, in the area that I'm privileged to represent, at the farm of Neil McCaig. He has a family farm in Puslinch township near Guelph, which is in the southern part of Wellington county. That's Puslinch township. You remember it well, and so does the member for St Catharines, I know, from the gravel issues of the late 1980s. This farm is a dairy farm. There aren't that many farms left in Puslinch township, but this is an important economic enterprise in Wellington county, and it's on the

fringe of the city. This is the kind of protection he needs to carry on and hopefully to pass his farm on to the next generation.

I also want to thank my colleagues the member for Hastings-Peterborough and the member for Lambton for the terrific job they did in terms of getting this bill as far as it has been. Certainly they undertook a very thorough consultation process involving all the stakeholders in rural Ontario, and I think that's the reason we've got such strong support in this House today for this bill.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate? The member for Timiskaming.

Mr Ramsay: I'm very pleased to be able to stand in my place tonight and speak to this bill, An Act to protect Farming and Food Production. I think it's a good follow-up to the original bill that was brought forward, as my colleagues have mentioned, by the Honourable Jack Riddell, who certainly served as one of the finest agriculture ministers this province has ever seen, absolutely.

As was mentioned, in the late 1980s, Jack brought in a bill that really started to wrestle to the ground a very contentious issue. With the changing living patterns in Ontario and with the unfortunately shrinking farm population, urbanites were moving into rural Ontario, and there were a lot of conflicts that occurred because of that.

I want to get into that in a minute, but before I get into that, I would like to acknowledge the presence of and congratulate Ed Sedgewick, who is the newly elected president of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture. I welcome you here, Ed, and your executive. I think you've got a great team there in the federation to lead Ontario farmers into the next year and almost to the next century. It's a great, strong team.

It's groups such as the Ontario Federation of Agriculture that really make legislation like this possible, that come to us in our riding offices and present the facts and the reasoning of why we need to have legislation such as this, why we need to update legislation such as this, and that keep us sharp and aware of all these issues. It's very important work, and I'd say to you, Ed, that it was the Ontario Federation of Agriculture that is probably responsible for my being in this place, because that was the first sort of community activity that I got involved in when one of the neighbour farmers came over and sold me a membership many years ago.

I got involved in that organization at the local level and became a provincial director and really understood the importance of representing the people you work with at home, and doing it on that level, it sort of whetted my appetite to do it on a broader base in my riding of Timiskaming. So I owe the federation a lot and really respect and admire the people who work in it. In fact, my wife, Kathy, and I were at an Ontario Federation of Agriculture in Timiskaming curling party on Saturday, and it was a lot of fun. They rented the Englehart curling rink. I've curled once in my life before —

Interjection: And not very well.

Mr Ramsay: — and as my colleague said, not very well, but it's a lot of fun and interesting, and the federa-

tion offers that also. Besides being advocates for farmers, they're also a great group that I think develops social cohesion among our rural residents, especially our farmers, and kind of lets you bridge that gap between all rural residents and just the farmers in inviting all the rural community together. We had quite a good crowd and we had a lot of fun and it was most enjoyable. I salute the group and the organization they did. It's very important work.

Tonight we're here to talk about this act, An Act to protect Farming and Food Production, and it is very important. I'd like to say to the people at home who may be watching why such an act is important.

I think the new name is maybe a better description to reflect the values of the 1990s today and really encapsulate what this is all about, that it's an act to protect farming and food production. What that means is that farmers who historically have practised various methods and adopted new methods in order to produce food — one of the most important functions, I'm sure all members would agree, in society — have to be protected so they are enabled to do that. It's very important that they can do that.

Those of us who have lived in the country for years understand what those practices are. In fact, very good practices can tend to be messy. If you're a good steward of the land, for instance, you want to make sure that you are putting manure back into the ground, that you're spreading that on the fields, that you're plowing that in. That is good stewardship of the land. Farmers were the first environmentalists, because they understood they had to take care of the land in order for it to be productive and sustainable.

When somebody moves in from town or from the city and they've worked very hard and they're maybe looking forward to the weekend in the backyard, and the backyard kind of fronts on my field, they maybe get upset that as farmers you're working at least six days a week and you're having to carry on activities that may be a bit distracting for that person.

I think as long as that activity is within the norm of farm operations, that farmer has to be free to carry out those operations. As long as they are environmentally sustainable and within normal practice, it's very important that there is no interference to that. If we allow interference in that farm operation, then we have impinged upon our ability to produce food. As I'm sure the Minister of Agriculture would agree with me, being a former Minister of Agriculture myself, Ontario stands second to none when it comes to food production. A very interesting fact that I picked up when I was the minister is that if you compare Ontario, for instance, with the state of Michigan, which is on the same latitude as Ontario and similar in size, although Michigan is a little smaller than Ontario, we produce 200 different commodities in Ontario; in Michigan, it's about 80.

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A lot of that has to do with the tremendous resourcefulness of our farmers and the advancement of our research and development in Ontario that we're able to be so

diverse in our agricultural base. There are not too many jurisdictions in the world that can say they produce over 200 different commodities. If it wasn't for our winters, we could be absolutely sustainable for food production, and if you didn't mind not eating oranges in the year, you could be sustainable in Ontario. We could grow our food to sustain Ontario and even beyond every year. There's no doubt about that. It's a very rich agricultural resource. We owe it not only to our farmers but to ourselves to protect our agricultural land base and the sector of the economy that is so important in producing that food source for Ontario.

I think people need to realize too that we produce our food for way beyond the borders of Ontario. Our agricultural economy is so strong that we are exporting commodities right around the world. Because we are so efficient in pork, for instance — when I was the minister, I know this was a big battle with the United States. The Americans at that time wanted to ban Ontario and Canadian pork from coming into the United States. Why? Because the American processors preferred the Canadian pork because it was a leaner cut of meat. They could make more product from the Canadian pork than they could from the American pork with its higher fat content at the time.

That was a result of the great research done at the University of Guelph, the great techniques and development that Ontario farmers had developed and our ability to raise pork very well and produce pork in this province. That's just one of the areas that we're leaders in. We are leaders in many other commodities. It's important to note that and how important it is to our economy.

I would also like to say, about the politics of this bill, that our agriculture critic, Pat Hoy, the member for Essex-Kent, has been asking this government to bring forward this bill. It's very, very important that this bill be brought forward. In fact, on December 3, the member for Essex-Kent stood in this place and made a statement because he was getting frustrated. I'd like to put this statement back into the record because I think what Mr Hoy said bears repeating. He said:

"Over the last few weeks we have seen this government rush to push its contentious legislation through the Legislature as quickly as possible. While they cannot move quickly enough to steamroll public opinion, they drag their feet when it comes to legislation that has wide public support.

"On June 26, the Minister of Agriculture introduced Bill 146," this bill, "the Farming and Food Production Protection Act. This act is intended to update existing legislation which governs farming practices in Ontario. The act was brought forward for second reading on September 24, and after receiving minimal debate it was shelved in favour of other legislation.

"The question," Mr Hoy went on to say, "is why? Our caucus agreed to facilitate the passage of this bill and we have seen in the past that the government has nothing against the prompt passage of legislation. So what's the problem? Why does the minister not continue with second

reading of Bill 146?" Well, we're finally here tonight, a few weeks later.

"Many of the new amalgamated municipalities, which include rural and urban areas, are eager to see this legislation pass before January 1, 1998. The minister should be getting pressure from his own caucus. I suggest he bring the legislation back to the House so we can discuss issues surrounding this bill. We see no reason for delay and urge the minister to bring this back so we can pass it by year's end. Minister, get your House leader on side today."

Minister, in order to be helpful, I would again like to ask for unanimous consent that we could go immediately to third reading so we could pass this bill tonight.

The Acting Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? Did I hear a no?

Mr Derwyn Shea (High Park-Swansea): Nobody said no.

Hon Mr Villeneuve: No, you didn't hear a thing.

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): I said no.

The Acting Speaker: I didn't hear you. So it's not agreed upon.

Mr Ramsay: It's really unfortunate that we're not able to proceed with that because I think it's important that we do get on with this because it's my understanding that all three parties are agreed with this bill and we really should get on with it.

As I said earlier, this bill is designed to protect farmers in their pursuit of normal farm practices and, as I said, that is a very, very important part of this act. The reason this bill is necessary to come in right now and to strengthen the original bill that Jack Riddell had introduced, the right-to-farm legislation, is that the attacks on farmers' rights to carry out normal farm practices have increased. Urban people who have moved into rural Ontario have now taken up a greater share of the population base. In fact, in some cases, because they have the time, they take a very keen interest in municipal politics and can absolutely take over a municipal council.

Quite frankly, it's not fair, even though I guess it's democratic, because I think, as people have realized, farming today with all its great mechanization and going into the computer age is still a very labour-intensive operation. Farmers find very difficult to have the time to devote to municipal politics. It's very difficult to take the time to get to council meetings twice a month, to do the committee meetings and to abandon that farm operation, if you don't have a really large operation and a staff behind you to dedicate that time.

Many rural councils can be dominated by newcomers who have come into the township and sort of want to now run the township the way they see it. Yet some of these farmers and their families have been there for hundreds of years, carrying on food production for all of us across this province and around this world. They deserve to be protected and this industry deserves to be protected. While, as a rural resident, I welcome anybody to come in and live in our area, it's a free country and it's great to see more people living in rural Ontario, it is important that those newcomers respect the traditions of rural Ontario and

good farming practices, because of the necessity for farmers to carry on a living and produce food for this country.

It's important that this act be brought up to date, as this bill will do here tonight, that it strengthens the rights of farmers and allows farmers to work more closely with their municipalities and allows the government to step in and to protect farmers, as the province of Ontario understands and recognizes the importance of the agricultural community and the agricultural sector in this economy.

Again, I'd like to take my hat off to the Ontario Federation of Agriculture because they have provided the minister with the model of how this should work and also some definitions — not all of which were taken up by the minister, and I think we need to point that out. I'd like to again talk about the federation and other farm groups, because they have really changed their approach in the last few years. I think politicians used to joke about when farmers came and they just talked about the problems and didn't bring solutions.

In the last 15 years, farm organizations have come before politicians and governments and not only pointed out to us what the problems are, but they've got their research together and they've put forward proposals. They've got solutions for us to consider. They've come with the answers and they're good answers, they're well researched, they've got good staff because they're well resourced now. That's very, very helpful to governments of all stripes when groups such as the federation of agriculture come in with very solid proposals as to how to fix problems in rural Ontario.

That's the case with this bill, that the Ontario Federation of Agriculture has done its homework. They've got great research and brought in a model right-to-farm bill. We'd actually like to see more of that model incorporated in that bill. We hope while this government is still in office — hopefully not too much longer, but while it is still in office — maybe they'll have a chance to reconsider as we pass this and bring in some amendments next year, so that we can make this bill even better and more closely modelled to what the OFA had considered.

Part of what is missing from this bill, as the Ontario Federation of Agriculture has provided, is a definition of "right to farm," which I think needs to be looked at by the minister, and a definition of "farmer," which I also think needs to be looked at. Right now, the way the bill is written, it maybe leaves open a little too wide an interpretation of these definitions. I think we need to have that debate. I'd be quite interested to hear from the minister or parliamentary assistant in their remarks why that's there. But we could do that next year because we're quite prepared to approve this now because, on the whole, this is very good.

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One thing we should talk about too, I think it's important, because in many cases farmers don't have the ability to take the time to run for municipal office, is that the government should consider talking to our municipalities and seeing if it's possible if municipalities would appoint at least one farmer on their planning boards. I think that

would go a long way to getting some direct input from the farming community on the different planning boards that our municipalities have so that those people on those planning boards could understand at first hand from farmers working out in those fields day in and day out the problems and challenges they have in the farming world. I think that would be very, very important.

It's very difficult to talk about any agricultural bill without commenting about what's happening with the farm tax rebate. I hearken back to those days when I was working with the Ontario Federation of Agriculture and how we wanted to make sure, quite a few governments ago, we got a program such as the farm tax rebate.

Now we've come full circle to a plan that in a way is the way we should have had it, the way England and France have it, that farm land, and in this case 75% of the assessment of farm land, will be exempt from taxation. But without some sort of compensating funding to the municipalities of course, what that's going to mean in many of these small townships such as where I live and many of my colleagues live, where the assessment base is still primarily farms and maybe a small hamlet, is that the burden of that 75% deficit to the municipality is going to go across the farm residences.

While the farmers may think they're getting away with only paying 25% of the assessed value of the land in their property taxes, of course that is just going to be thrown back on the farm residence, when there's not a good balance, as there isn't in many of our municipalities, of commercial and industrial assessment. This is something that is going to put an undue burden — and I've seen it in many municipalities. In fact, my township clerk has said to me that in Casey township, in Timiskaming district in northern Ontario, without the transition fund that we know is only temporary our tax bill would go up 200%.

I know that's not going to happen because there's no way the Harris government is going to allow that to happen because they've got wads of money and they're going to throw wads of money at it this year. My prediction is they might throw wads of money at it maybe for one more year or to whenever the next election comes, but after that, boys and girls, we're on our own out there. All of a sudden the property tax bills are really going to rip because that's what they're saying, "Let 'er rip on the property tax bills," and they're really going to go, which surprises me because Mike Harris said "No new taxes."

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: Order, member for Nepean.

Mr Ramsay: Now Mike Harris has raised property taxes and of course they're going to be setting the mill rate pretty soon for the education portion of that also. We thought that was coming a few months ago and then this month; I understand now it's January, maybe. That's going to be coming, so there's another new tax that's coming from the Mike Harris government.

But all that's going to be piled on rural Ontario, and I think we're going to have to be very careful of that. Maybe this bill goes partway to protecting rural Ontario and farmers but I think we have a lot of other things we

need to be doing and not offloading down on to the farmers of Ontario, so they can stay productive and be some of the best agricultural producers in the world.

The Acting Speaker: Questions or comments?

Mr Marchese: I'm happy to have these two minutes to respond to the member for Timiskaming. First, I would say that the people — hopefully the rural community members who are watching tonight should know the dictatorial and autocratic modus operandi of these folks across the way. They need to know that.

We've witnessed it in Bill 26, where they gave themselves autocratic dictatorial powers as ministers in the government to do what they want. We have witnessed that in the amalgamation of the city of Toronto with all the other cities around, where they refused to listen, in spite of the referendum we had, to the people who opposed it. We've had the amalgamation of Chatham-Kent where they refused, through Dr Meyboom, whom I refer to as Dr Doom, to listen to the people of Kent in particular.

We have witnessed the changes of the rules in this House where these people across the way have done it in such a way to make sure that bills get passed quickly in a way that suits them, not the opposition or anybody opposing them. They've changed the rules that permit less scrutiny on the bills that these people are trying to rush through with incredible haste. Then, M. Villeneuve, mon ami, le ministre de la Prospérité, me dit, "We're waiting for your leader, Howard Hampton, to deal with this issue." Good God. I thought the Royal Highness was on the other side, not on this side of the third party, for God's sake.

Then we have the ultimate problem where we have a number of Liberal members asking for unanimous consent to move this to third reading. But the member for Timiskaming raised questions that he's got that he wants you, M. Villeneuve, and others to answer. We have similar questions. We just attacked you over the last couple of weeks for going ahead with incompetent bills, with changes that you had to have Bill 164 to correct, and now you want us to rush through with this. We need scrutiny. That's why we want this to go in committee, so we do it right, not wrong.

Mr Gary Fox (Prince Edward-Lennox-South Hastings): I would like to say that this is really a good-news bill for the province of Ontario and rural Ontario, because it's protection for the agricultural operations.

We have a situation now where the urbanites are moving to rural Ontario to enjoy the rural life and we have to respect that, but at the same time we have to set rules and regulations so those people can move to these areas and not be a hindrance to our agricultural operations. I was a member of municipal council myself in my previous life and we have to set directions for municipal politicians so they can respect what's happening with our farm operations. By setting this direction to the municipalities, therefore they can adhere to what we feel is necessary for the people of the province.

I have to use the example of my own operation with a subdivision next door. By having in the offer to purchase, and also stipulated in the deed, the noise and odour effects

of the operation next door, it certainly made a better circumstance between myself and my neighbours by their knowing what is taking place next door before they purchase. So this way we're certainly making progress towards seeing that this happens throughout the province and that our farm operations can enjoy the prosperity they've had in the past.

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M. Jean-Marc Lalonde (Prescott et Russell) : Tout d'abord, je dois féliciter mon collègue de Timiskaming. Je peux dire que c'est un projet de loi qui est attendu depuis nombre de mois. C'est un projet de loi que vraiment les administrateurs attendent depuis longtemps.

Nous savons que de plus en plus, les personnes, les familles démenagent des grands centres urbains et s'en viennent dans le secteur rural, et tout le temps, ces cultivateurs qui sont en place depuis nombre d'années se font harceler à tous les jours : la poussière, la senteur, les lumières durant la nuit. Ces cultivateurs-là doivent produire. On dépend sur les cultivateurs.

Mais une chose que je regrette, c'est de voir que nous avons attendu si longtemps. Tout récemment, mon collègue M. Hoy a présenté une déclaration disant, qu'attendons-nous de présenter le projet de loi en deuxième lecture afin qu'on puisse le présenter en troisième lecture ? Je peux dire que lundi dernier, ce projet de loi ne paraissait même pas à l'ordre du jour. Hier soir, j'en ai parlé dans mon discours. Au lieu du débat que nous avons eu hier soir, je disais, on aurait dû discuter sur les projets de loi 146 et 170.

Mais une chose que je peux voir dans ce projet de loi, c'est qu'on devrait s'assurer que toute municipalité qui dessert un secteur rural ait sur son comité d'urbanistes une personne qui représente l'agriculture, parce que nous savons que la municipalité va avoir le dernier mot.

Nous allons définitivement voter en faveur de ce projet de loi parce qu'on l'attend depuis longtemps ; nous sommes en faveur. Mais sans avoir un projet de loi présenté par ce gouvernement qui protégerait nous agriculteurs pour l'avenir, le futur, il va être encore très, très difficile pour eux de survivre encore pour de nombreuses années, parce que dans les municipalités, les développeurs mettent toujours des pressions sur les conseils municipaux.

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie) : I, with my colleagues, want to express my satisfaction and thanks to the government for finally bringing this bill to the House tonight and bringing it forward for debate. I remind them that the process in this place, as has been developed over a number of years, is very clear. Some of the criticism that we on this side of the House have had of you over the last two and a half years is that you've pushed through with an agenda that, after it saw the light of day and people began to see how it was going to impact them in their lives and their communities, they found it was flawed and was in need of further refinement and further discussion and in fact the need for you to bring in further bills to correct the mistakes you've made.

That's why we have the processes in this House that we do and that's why we were so anxious for you to bring this

bill forward, so that we might debate it in this House at some length as the importance of this piece of legislation warrants and deserves, so that we might then, as is the custom of this place that has been developed over a number of years, bring it out to the people of the province so they might have a say about what's in that bill and how it affects them, to tell us, as the legislators elected to take responsibility for the laws that we pass that affect everybody who lives in this province, whether they on one hand think it's good stuff or on the other hand might have some criticism of it.

The member for Timiskaming laid some questions he had on the table here tonight but, alas, if we don't respect the process that we've all bought into in this place — we call it democracy, we call it the legislative process — it will all be for naught.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Timiskaming, you have two minutes.

Mr Ramsay: I thank the members who commented after my speech tonight on this bill. I want to say, to really explain why I think we can get on with this bill is because of the length of time it has been before this House. It is unfortunate that since it was called in June, we haven't had the opportunity to get to debate before this. We've had a lot of input over this time from the various groups involved and the people from rural Ontario, but it looks like we will have to wait. We will have hearings and, from that, maybe we'll get some improvements to the bill beyond that.

As I said, we would be willing to go ahead with this bill as it is now, but some time in the intersession, I guess we will be able to have some sort of hearings, if that's what the House leaders agree. I hope, Minister, that you would talk to the government House leader and the Premier to call back this Legislature in the winter or to make sure that by mid-March, when you are planning to come back, you call this bill as the first bill when we're back.

I think it's important that, instead of leaving it, like last time, sitting on the order paper since June, we carry this over. If we are to prorogue tomorrow night, bring us back as soon as possible, and when that does happen, bring this bill forward so that we can get on with it and give it the third reading it deserves.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland) : It's certainly a pleasure to rise to address Bill 146, the Farming and Food Production Protection Act. I think just for a moment we should review some of the things that have been going on in developing this act. This minister, along with the parliamentary assistants, first travelled this province extensively to do consultations to sort out the kind of bill that should be brought forward, and that's how this bill was developed.

They then introduced it in the late spring or early summer, back in late June anyway, for first reading and it was received by all parties with great enthusiasm. We then had second reading in the early fall, and one of the things that held it up was that the Leader of the Opposition wasn't here to take his regular hour in debate as the critic for this

particular bill. Because he hasn't been here ever since and willing to debate it, we haven't been able to proceed with second reading. We should be honest about that and where it's at.

Now we're able to proceed. It would be awfully nice if we could get on with third reading either tonight or tomorrow. All we need is unanimous consent. Certainly this bill is tremendously important to our Minister of Agriculture, who has worked extremely hard on it. I think it's only fair that we get on with it.

Interjections.

Mr Galt: The leader of the third party is suggesting we could do it on Monday, and I think that's a really good idea if he'd like to do it on Monday.

Mr Wildman: Are you out of your nut?

Mr Galt: Thank you very much.

I grew up on a mixed farm cum dairy farm. I practised veterinary medicine in Seaforth and Napanee and in a diagnostic lab in Brighton. This subject is extremely close to me and very dear to me. It's a very, very important topic. It relates around a lot of nuisance issues such as noise, odour and dust. I can tell you, as a veterinarian practising large animal medicine, I have run into odours of all kinds and I certainly know what odours are about. Even today out in rural Ontario, yes, I find some that I don't particularly find pleasant and I can understand why some of the newcomers to rural Ontario have some concerns and issues. They need to be addressed and this bill certainly addresses them.

One of the experiences I had was moving to Northumberland, buying 10 acres with a lot of apples on them and wondering how to handle them. I asked a neighbour to look after them and his first comment to me was, "Would you mind if we end up spraying around your house at 4 in the morning?" That's a normal farm practice when you're looking after apple trees and looking after apples, and of course I didn't mind at all. He was looking after them, it was a normal farm practice and we got along just fine.

Farming has been practised in this province for a very, very long time. It has been practised in the world for a long time. Agrarian society started somewhere around 10,000 years ago, but there have been some very radical changes in farming in the last century.

For example, at the turn of the century the harvesting of hay was scythed with a new horse-drawn sickle mower that was able to cut it, but we still stooped hay and pitched it on with a pitchfork. Later came a hayloader and then balers; small square and small round bales and then big round bales and now big square bales. There were hay crimpers and all kinds of equipment to handle these bales, along with forge harvesters that chop hay. That is just one area of harvesting that has changed dramatically. You could go into other areas of harvesting that have changed: automatic stable cleaners and all kinds of computerized watering and feeding devices used for various classes of livestock.

At the same time, our society has changed. A hundred years ago, somewhere around 80% or 90% of the population were either directly or indirectly very close to our

farms and to producing food, and that's still true in many of our Third World countries. Today here in Ontario somewhere around 1% of our population are involved in farming, so one farmer feeds 100 other people. In Northumberland that's probably closer to 3%.

Part of that is related to the efficiencies and the kind of technology we have today that would absolutely dumfound people 30 or 40 years ago. They couldn't possibly imagine the kind of agriculture we're practising today. But we need this kind of high-yield agriculture if we're going to have the environmentally friendly society we've gotten used to. Just imagine, if we did not have high-yield agriculture today, we would have to put under the plow an area equal to South America and another half of South America, in other words, one and a half times South America, just to feed today's world population. That's the kind of efficiency that industry has created in this past century.

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More and more, we are seeing people of retirement age moving from the city to rural Ontario. This demographic trend is well-documented, both here in Canada as well as throughout the US. It has only been recently that we've reached a milestone never seen before in this century where more people are now moving from the city to rural Ontario than are moving from rural Ontario to the city. Up until now, throughout this century it's been unprecedented the number of people moving to the city.

Professor David Foot from the University of Toronto wrote a very interesting book a few years ago called *Boom, Bust and Echo*.

Mr Wildman: Sounds like your speech.

Mr Galt: In that book it talks about how rural migration will be speeding up the next century. It will be really dramatic. Boom, bust and echo; you're right on.

Also, it cites that particularly east of Toronto this will be very true and that, of course, is Northumberland, Peterborough county and those general areas. We're going to see in the next century a tremendous expansion.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): And Durham East.

Mr Galt: Durham East as well, you're absolutely right, and Hastings. We're going to see tremendous expansion and pressures out in that area.

This trend is also identified in Faith Popcorn's book. She talks about future trends in her book called *The Popcorn Report*. It talks about people cashing out on their expensive homes, moving and buying a cheaper home in rural Ontario. Certainly this is true, as Foot talks in his book about people cashing out their expensive homes in Toronto, moving to rural Ontario, buying homes at half or a quarter of the price and, with the difference, investing it for a really nice pension while they're living in their retirement years.

Foot also indicates that they're not just moving to rural Ontario, moving to small towns; they tend to be moving to lots that are five to 10 acres in size and sort of mixing in with the agricultural community. This is becoming a real challenge to local and municipal politicians, to farmers

and to planners, because we don't want to end up as victims of urban sprawl, reducing and taking away all kinds of productive farmland. That is very, very important to the people of Ontario.

But this migration to rural Ontario is creating all kinds of problems for farm land and for agricultural production. Now is the time to plan, because as we move down the road, these baby boomers who will soon be retiring will be moving to rural Ontario. This particular bill, the Farm Practices Protection Act, will be proactive to address some of the traditional areas of conflict that occur between farmers and non-farmers and also between farmers and farmers. Certainly some farmers are not very tolerant of what some other farmers do.

I think we should first recognize that the agricultural industry in Ontario is a \$25-billion industry. It is tremendously important to our provincial economy and it does indeed deserve our support on both sides of the House. Second, it protects farmers' rights to produce safe, reliable and high-quality food that is enjoyed by so many of the people in Ontario, but not only in Ontario, because we export so much of our food internationally and it's recognized as high quality throughout the world. Third, it provides farmers with the assurance that they can conduct their business and produce food without nuisance lawsuits or unnecessary restrictive bylaws.

In reverse, it also gives some protection to the newcomer to rural Ontario, one who may not understand what normal rural practices are. They might complain or not complain, and they won't be taken advantage of. They'll better understand because of this bill what their rights are. I think that's tremendously important as well.

This act establishes a normal Farm Practices Protection Board. This will ensure that there is fairness, both for farmers as well as for the new residents, the non-farming residents who enjoy rural Ontario and want to live in rural Ontario. Farmers will be able to apply to this board to recognize rulings on practices under dispute and realize that it's two-sided.

There will be public education by OMAFRA to give information to potential rural property buyers, real estate agents, farmers and municipal authorities to let them know what normal farm practices are. There will be an information campaign that'll be a joint effort. This bill is certainly a proactive approach to deal with problems before they start. It's very important to realize that this will not override any provincial legislation in place; it will protect health, safety, the environment, and it certainly will not discourage anybody moving from cities to rural Ontario. Certainly we in Northumberland want to welcome those people with open arms.

In closing, this bill will lead to better, more informed bylaws. It will improve the public understanding regarding agriculture in Ontario. This bill seeks to establish a balance between the right of farmers to conduct their business and the rights of residents to live in our rural communities.

It was a wise farmer who once told me that if something is inevitable, then it is indeed not debatable. I'm confident that this bill will promote greater understanding

and protection of the farm industry that provides Ontarians with the essentials of modern life: great food. I'm pleased, Mr Speaker, to be able to enthusiastically support this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bernard Grandmaître):
Questions and comments?

Mr Marchese: Mr Speaker, just two short minutes to respond to much of what he spoke about in terms of process. I find it a very curious thing that the member for Northumberland would say, like mon ami M. Villeneuve, that the reason they could not proceed with this particular bill is because our leader, Howard Hampton, hasn't been around. I find that a bit incomprehensible. Our leader has been around here all of the time, every day, with rare exceptions. But if I gather from his comments that he says, "We couldn't do much of that because he wasn't available," does that mean we should keep our leader out of this place so as to prevent most bills or any other bills that they might want to present from being presented? Is that the argument that they are advancing? It appears to me a ludicrous way of governing, if that were the case.

The way to govern as they have is that they have used their majority most of the time to do what they wanted. They've done it with Bill 26; they've done it with the amalgamation of the city of Toronto; they've done it with Bill 160, in spite of the tremendous opposition from over 100,000 teachers and people who were very interested in opposing that particular bill. In spite of that, they've used their 81 members, which in this place makes it a majority, to override the wishes of the opposition, not just members, but the wishes of the opposition outside of this place. They have governed in that way except, it appears, in this particular case, where they could not present the bill because our leader, Howard Hampton, hasn't been around, says he.

I find it a curious way of arguing. I hope they can advance the argumentation a little more effectively so that we can have better presentation of the issues in this House.

Mr O'Toole: It's my pleasure to acknowledge the remarks made by the member for Northumberland with respect to Bill 146, farm practices protection. I think it's long overdue and I really urge all members to allow this to proceed to third reading this evening.

I'm very proud to comment on not only the families but the amount of produce that's produced in the riding of Durham East. It's east of Oshawa. We're right on the very margin of urban growth. There's the pressure of urban growth and the pressures of farm practices. This is where the two collide; they don't coexist very well. I thank Minister Villeneuve for bringing this important discussion before the House to ensure the practices of farming today are allowed to exist.

In my riding we have a wide variety of production in apples. Certainly when I mention apples, I think of Irwin Smith from Ocala Winery. Imagine that, a winery right in my riding of Durham East. It's the most northerly winery, apparently, in Ontario. Also, I think of Archibald's. Just this past summer they opened up a winery themselves. The diversification in the farm business today is there meeting

the future by changing its practices. This government is supporting those practices.

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I'll also mention that an important commodity is the dairy and milk production. Immediately I think of the Van Camps who just invested over \$180,000 recently in expanding a new, modern, up-to-date barn and milking facility.

I think also of the pork producers. Dave Frew and his family immediately come to mind, who have not only expanded their operations, they've improved their operations as well.

I could go on all night. When I think of the most logical explanation of our area, it is Garnet Rickard, who is well recognized for the development of the seed industry. Durham East is well represented. I thank the minister —

The Deputy Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Thank you. Further questions and comments? Okay, the member for Northumberland.

Mr Galt: Just responding to the members who have commented, I certainly appreciate the comments from the member for Durham East giving support to the bill and to my comments earlier.

The member for Fort York is all excited about what's going on, but I can tell you that the minister has been pushing for this bill, has been pushing very hard. He's desperate to get this bill through. He wants it through. The farmers from Northumberland have been phoning me wanting it through. I've talked to him. He pleads for it. Why hasn't it gone?

I think you can see tonight, your critic, the leader, was the first to speak for an hour. That's because he wasn't here. It was brought forward in the fall, and now he got his hour. All you need is cooperation. It would have been here. You can see tonight, with the lack of cooperation, it's "No" when we want to move to third reading. The federation of agriculture representatives are sitting here watching you people say no. The Liberals want it, everybody here wants it and you are saying no, no, no. Try saying yes. We'd just love to put it through.

Mr Marchese: Tomorrow is the session's last day.

Mr Galt: It's just an excellent bill. It's all good news. I know it's tough to have good news but we just want to get on with it. Your leader suggested Monday morning. I'm willing to be here Monday morning to get it approved if your party will be here.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr Galt: You just say the word and I'll be here, because this is an important bill to get through and get looked after. Certainly the minister has been concerned. He's worked hard at it. He's gone across this province with his parliamentary assistant to find out what it is that the rural population needs, both farmers and the newcomers, those who are not farmers, to know what is needed in this particular bill.

I can tell you, it's been well worked out. It's going to address most, if not all, of the issues. All you have to do is say yes and we'll get on with third reading.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate? The member for St Catharines.

Hon Mr Villeneuve: Now the voice of reason.

Mr Bradley: Here is the voice. I want to thank my colleagues. They should recognize that within the provincial constituency of St Catharines there are indeed some farms and within the expanded constituency of St Catharines there are a large number of farms. The Minister of Agriculture would know that over the years I have, as an urban member, spoken out on behalf of the farming community in this province, who I believe play a very significant role in both our economy and our environment.

I can recall when I had the opportunity to be Minister of the Environment that many of the people who were strongest in insisting upon the best of environmental practices were members of the farming community. The reason for that is quite obvious. That is because they would feel the impact directly of bad environmental practices within their own property. For this reason, I know that those who are supporting this bill within the farming community will have uppermost in their minds as well the protection of the environment. Many of the people over the years who have lodged complaints, legitimate complaints, I might say, have been members of the farm community who may have observed someone else not engaged in the kind of practices they would want on a farm. This bill, I'm sure, with the provisions in it, will continue to protect the environment, as it should be.

Some people have mentioned, and I heard it mentioned just a moment ago, the fact that a number of urban people are moving to the countryside, moving to areas where farms predominate. One of the problems that exists is that some of the people who move from the urban area to a rural area want to retain the urban services and the urban way of life they had, at least the best of that, and also enjoy the best of rural life. So a conflict can arise between those who move to the countryside and those who already reside there and are engaged in farming practices.

I believe that farmers are entitled on the lands that they hold to be able to farm as they see fit within the rules and regulations and legislation and policies of the government of Ontario and the government of Canada. It annoys me to no end when urban people move to the countryside and then express their views about noise, about dust and dirt and about odours, because one must recognize that if someone is moving to the countryside, if one is moving into an area where farming practices are being carried out, there is an obligation to fit in with that area and not to ask farmers to cease and desist from normal farming practices which may produce odours, may produce dust and dirt and may produce noise. I think those municipalities which, if not encourage, easily acquiesce to people moving from urbanized areas to rural areas should recognize that those who are in the rural areas farming their land should certainly be entitled to do so in a fashion that is conducive to good farming practices.

I am very concerned when I see the number of severances that are granted in certain parts of the province, because I think the severances are a problem for people in

the farming areas. What often happens is that on those severances we have urban people moving out, and when a city allows several of these severances and allows the urban people to move out to the countryside, it is often detrimental to the normal farming practices which take place. I know many members of the Federation of Agriculture and other farm organizations have expressed concern when they have seen severance practices from certain municipalities which have not been conducive to carrying on farming as it should be carried on. When we see holus-bolus granting of severances, when we see urban services being thrust on rural areas and rural people then forced to pay for those, we see some discontent there.

I know that makes the developers happy. I know that in some cases some developers would like to develop on prime agricultural land. We have a unique resource in this province, and that is our prime agricultural land, but we cannot say to farmers in the province that you must stay on the land, that you must only farm the land, if we're not prepared to provide supports to the farmers. This can happen in two ways: either Canadians are prepared to pay the appropriate price for the product that farmers produce or they must be prepared to support farmers in many ways that aren't necessarily available to those who reside in urban areas.

To this point in time, it has been very difficult on many occasions for farmers to obtain from their land the appropriate price for the products they produce. Indeed, there have been occasions when farmers have produced product at a certain price and have had to sell it at a loss. Sometimes, and we always hope it's the majority of the time, farmers are able to produce product which provides a profit. But we do have an obligation as urban dwellers, as rural dwellers, as those in semirural areas, to ensure that our farmers are appropriately supported in difficult times, because of course their operations are subject to weather conditions, to climatic conditions, which can cause great damage. They also sometimes require some assistance or some special consideration in terms of the taxation policies of a province. I never begrudge this to members of the rural community, to those who farm the land, because I believe that is essential for our province.

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It is extremely important economically and it is important in terms of our ethical position within the world that we continue to produce food, not only for our own people but for people in other countries. It is an obligation I believe we have as human beings here in our province because we are blessed with certain climatic conditions, with certain soil conditions and, of course, blessed with the expertise that our farmers have in this province and with some of the assistance that can be provided directly or indirectly through the Ministry of Agriculture, federally and provincially, and through some of our universities and colleges.

What we have to watch for is that we don't have developers buying up large tracts of land, refusing to have it farmed, having it lie without any specific use and then coming along to municipalities, saying, "See, the farmers

aren't farming it so you might as well develop it." We keep encroaching further and further upon very valuable agricultural land.

Our country and our province are both large in mass, but when we look at the future needs of the world for food, or indeed for our own country, the land that is available where there is good soil or the combination of good soil and good climatic conditions for many products, particularly those which grow above the ground, that land is relatively limited. Yes, we're a bigger country than many, but that land is still limited. I think we have an obligation to work to preserve that agricultural land in our province.

I lament the fact that when I drive from St Catharines to Toronto, I see more and more an erosion of that land, erosion not in the physical sense, but an erosion in a sense of development which is taking over prime agricultural land. It's enough to make some people cry to see what happens to our good agricultural land. So I encourage all members of the Legislature to keep our farmers on the farm, to keep them viable. This piece of legislation is one tool that can be used to ensure in some way that farmers are able to carry out their farming practices and to be successful in doing so.

I recall when I sat on St Catharines city council and we dealt with the issue of land designation and urban boundaries that I fought at that time for very restricted urban boundaries for our city. I know some people, unless they have paved every last centimetre of the land in their community, are not satisfied. That is considered to be progress. I know the Minister of Agriculture and I would be in agreement that we wouldn't want that to happen and we would reject that kind of thought about the agricultural land in this province, so I will continue to advocate on behalf of agricultural land and on behalf of the farmers on that land.

One of my concerns, and I hope the Minister of Agriculture will share this with his colleague the Minister of Finance and his other colleague the Minister of Municipal Affairs, is that with the downloading that is taking place — and you may believe I'm doing this in a very political sense, but I'm trying to talk about a practical consideration — with the downloading of responsibility my fear is that municipalities will be more inclined to grant severances which would not be conducive to the best land production out there. I hope that the downloading doesn't have that effect but I am not particularly optimistic about that at this time.

I also want to express regret that the government has decided, with its obsession for appealing to the extreme right wing, to remove seats from rural areas. I know that if you remove the seats from the rural areas, those of us in urban areas then probably have more say, but I think it's important that we have a significant number of members of this assembly who speak on behalf of farmers and people who reside in rural areas. This huge consolidation of seats in many areas of the province simply to satisfy the extreme right, simply to appeal to certain groups who think this is important, we are in that case not doing the right thing if we are to do so.

I want to say as well that with the environmental practices that we're involved in, farmers again, above almost everybody else, recognize that preventive practices are more important than curative practices. First, they're far more economical and, second, they prevent the problem before it exists. So for those who would be fearful that members of the farm community are somehow wanting to overshadow or overrule the Ministry of the Environment, they should know again that farmers have a vested interest in good environmental practices which will not end up causing them problems.

I remember the problem, as my friend the Minister of Agriculture will, with alachlor at one time, when alachlor got into the wells. It didn't so much get into the wells of urban areas, it got into the wells of rural areas, and so curative action had to be taken to solve that problem, and I know all of us would want to see action taken which would prevent this kind of problem, and I don't think this bill will have a detrimental effect on that.

Since I have the opportunity to do so, there are some farms on the Niagara Escarpment, and I want to tell my friend the Minister of the Environment, who was at one time responsible for the Niagara Escarpment Commission before it was wrestled away from him by the Premier — because he was doing too good a job, I suspect — that there are some farm operations on the Niagara Escarpment and on lands adjacent to the Niagara Escarpment, and I hope that we don't make the mistake of allowing widespread development on that.

I know within the confines of the cabinet that my friend Mr Sterling, the Minister of the Environment, will be bringing that message home. He will want to ensure, as would my friend from Dufferin-Peel I'm sure, that the people who sit on the Niagara Escarpment Commission are those who are dedicated to preserving that land, because I have seen some applications where there is already what we call — I discussed this earlier privately with my friend the Minister of Agriculture — the new buzzword is "agritourism," and it can be very beneficial. Let me assure you it can be very beneficial.

In the Niagara Peninsula we have wineries which sometimes have restaurants, and it's right at the farm, but you look out and all you can see for acres and acres, I assure you, are the vineyards. Now there are people coming forward who want to put more than just the winery or more than just the restaurant on the land, so what started out as a good idea, that is, agritourism, starts into development of this land where they are soon going to want to put, as I say, the Escarpment Hilton or some other development. I know my friend the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs and my friend the Minister of the Environment will be resisting those applications, will be speaking out against those applications, because one knows the importance of preserving agricultural land and the other knows the importance of preserving the escarpment.

I wanted to make sure I did not take my full time this evening, just to demonstrate to you that there are occasions when it isn't necessary to take the full time. I am

glad that we have had a debate on this bill. I am glad that it has come forward before us. I know that any who may make representations concerning this will have those representations listened to with care. If there are any modifications either in a legislative sense or a regulatory sense that would come later, I know they will come only with the appropriate consultation with those who are directly affected.

It is my pleasure to speak, as I say, in support of members of our farming community. I wish them well. I wish that we will preserve that prime agricultural land across the province and, most of all, I wish that we will preserve the viability of our farming operations right across Ontario.

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The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments? Further debate?

Mr Villeneuve has moved second reading of Bill 146. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Shall the bill be ordered for third reading?

Hon Mr Villeneuve: Speaker, may I take this opportunity to thank all of those who participated in the second reading debate.

Mr Wildman: It's a little out of order, but thanks very much.

The Deputy Speaker: It is out of order, but —

Hon Mr Villeneuve: Then I simply say that I do, to some degree reluctantly, refer the bill to the standing committee on resources development.

The Deputy Speaker: The bill is accordingly referred to the standing committee on resources development? Agreed? Agreed.

SUPPLY ACT, 1997

LOI DE CRÉDITS DE 1997

Mr Baird, on behalf of Mr Eves, moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 175, An Act to authorize the payment of certain amounts for the Public Service for the fiscal year ending on March 31, 1998 / *Projet de loi 175, Loi autorisant le paiement de certaines sommes destinées à la fonction publique pour l'exercice se terminant le 31 mars 1998.*

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean): Bill 175 provides the legal approval for expenditures made during the fiscal year ending March 31, 1998, based on the approved estimates. Supply bills, of course, are a normal part of the government spending process. However, the expenditures approved in Bill 175 reflect this government's commitment to spend less money while at the same time reducing the size of government. We know we are spending taxpayers' money, not ours, and we are accountable for every dollar the government spends. This government is committed to the principle of accountability to the taxpayer in everything it does. Our plan is based on the needs of the people of the province of Ontario.

During our first two and a half years in office, we posed many tough questions and looked for answers. We looked at how other jurisdictions changed the way they provided services. We faced very serious challenges and made difficult decisions, many of which had been avoided for many years. Madam Speaker, the results have been remarkable, and I know you'd agree.

We have drastically cut out-of-control government spending and are dramatically reducing its overbearing size. We have cut taxes a total of 30 times in two budgets. We are restructuring our relationship with local government and delineating responsibility for services best provided at the municipal level. We have refocused social assistance funding and rebalanced our labour laws. We have eliminated hundreds of unnecessary regulations, to let the private sector get on with creating jobs and growth.

This is a crucial break from past governments which saw the provincial government grow ever larger, more costly and more out of touch with the very people it was there to serve. We are demanding that government operate like a business by introducing a rigorous business planning process for every ministry.

The process identifies objectives and sets targets to measure results. It ensures accountability and signals which programs are no longer relevant to the needs of the people of Ontario. We are committed to maintaining the quality of services by finding ways of delivering them more efficiently. We are protecting priority services within a more affordable, innovative government. In other words, we are focusing on results that put the people of Ontario first. Our cautious and prudent fiscal approach has kept us on track for a balanced budget by the year 2000-01. The deficit for 1997-98 will decline to \$5.6 billion from the \$6.6 billion we projected just a few short months ago in the 1997 budget.

We are eliminating the deficit in a planned and manageable fashion. To date we have cut our own administrative spending in our government by 33% and have reduced our own bureaucracy by more than 17%, or 14,000 full-time positions. At the same time, we are making significant reinvestment into priority services and important restructuring that will save us money in the future and provide us with very important returns today.

For example, we are investing more than \$2 billion into health care restructuring and an additional \$140 million this year for essential services like dialysis, transplants and cardiac care services — cardiac care services like the excellent work they do at the Ottawa Heart Institute where Dr Wilbert Keon is the director-general and there is the tremendous staff they have there, Dr Higginson, Dr Beanlands and company — an internationally well-respected heart institute right here in Ontario.

In our last two budgets we announced major reinvestment into education, including \$650 million for school capital projects, a tremendously important issue in the constituency of Nepean where overcrowding is a very serious concern. The government led by Premier Harris and the then Minister of Education, John Snobelen, announced \$650 million, of which \$20 million is going to

Barr Haven, a community in my riding, where they're building two high schools, with the first high school already well under way, and the photo is here from the sod-turning.

The contractor is a well-respected Canadian company doing a good job. The member for Ottawa-Rideau should know they've already got the crane out there, the hole is in the ground and they're already putting the walls up. It's a very good project. I know the member for Ottawa-Rideau was very supportive of that initiative as well, and the Carleton Roman Catholic school board building that school is building it very efficiently, very wisely and very well. The Carleton Roman Catholic school board runs a very good, efficient operation. They spend 40% less than one of the neighbouring boards and actually get higher student achievement on many of the key indicators. They do a very good job.

Mr Wayne Lessard (Windsor-Riverside): How much are they going to be cut?

Mr Baird: The member for Windsor-Riverside says — under the funding formula they could very well get more money. They operate such an efficient funding formula and they get better results by spending 40% less than the board across the street, across Baseline Road. They do a very terrific job.

Mr Lessard: Then they should cut more.

Mr Baird: I know you don't want to hear about the good news in Nepean and how the Carleton Roman Catholic school board and Phil Rocco and June Flynn-Turner do business. That's the good news.

In this fiscal year we're also spending \$300 million for the Ontario student opportunities trust fund and \$500 million for the provincial share of the research and development challenge fund. R&D is a big job creator in my part of the province: Nortel, Newbridge and a lot of small high-tech firms, growing. This measure is designed to help more and to help our university system.

Ontario's second-quarter finances show that this government's plan is working. Ontario's economy is responding with both jobs and growth, and renewed confidence and optimism. I noticed a number of industries in Fort York in the riding of my colleague M. Marchese are making record profits this year, some very profitable enterprises in Fort York, creating a lot of jobs. In Fort York alone the endangered species of the crane is now reappearing across the skylines of Fort York riding, since 1995.

Interjections.

Mr Baird: I arrived here in 1995. I didn't see a lot of cranes in Fort York, but everywhere you look out in Fort York you can see evidence that the Mike Harris plan is working.

Ontario's economy is responding with jobs and growth and renewed confidence and optimism. Even while we are experiencing the largest restructuring ever undertaken in Ontario, consumer and business confidence remains high. Real economic growth is at 4.4% in Ontario, compared to 3.7% for Canada. So something is happening in Ontario that just isn't taking place in other parts of the country.

The provincial government's plan is yielding some solid economic growth.

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Madam Speaker, housing starts have increased by 27%, and I know you're excited about that because that's good news for home builders, it's good news for those enterprises which produce appliances and other products. It puts a lot of folks to work, whether in Fort York or Riverdale or Nepean or Etobicoke-Humber or Hamilton West or High Park-Swansea, and that's good news for people wanting to provide for their families.

We have consistently said, and now we have proven, that you can cut taxes and spending at the same time and still see an increase in revenue as the private sector creates more and better jobs across the province. Tax cuts are building confidence and economic momentum to boost private sector growth. Lower tax rates have provided increased incentives for investment, entrepreneurship and innovation.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): How right can you be?

Mr Baird: The member for St Catharines says, "How right can you be?" Well, we're obviously very right. The plan is working.

These in turn lead to a more dynamic economy and a permanently higher growth rate rather than short-term job creation. The private sector has created 204,000 new jobs in the past nine months in the province.

Mrs Lillian Ross (Hamilton West): How many?

Mr Baird: The member for Hamilton West asks, "How many?" It's 204,000. That's a lot of new jobs in places like Cambridge, where they are doing very well at Toyota, and in High Park-Swansea.

While a great deal has been done, while a great amount has been accomplished to date, the job is not yet done. We will continue to explore the most cost-effective ways for government to nurture new job growth. We will continue to work hard to ensure taxpayers' dollars are spent wisely and well. We will press on to do what is in the best interests of the Ontario economy and in the best interests of the people of Ontario, so that once again Ontario is the economic engine of Canada, so that once again Ontario will be a magnet for jobs, investment and opportunity, and not known as a mismanaged debtor that's overgoverned, overregulated and overtaxed. Ontario once again will be the economic engine of Canada.

In the second fiscal quarter of this year, April to June, we saw economic growth annualized at a rate of 7.2% in Ontario — incredibly good news. The plan is working and the economy is looking up. We're looking forward to a prosperous 1998 where we can build more jobs for those who have been left out to date and build on the successes.

This Supply Act will allow us to pay the salaries of the hardworking public servants in Ontario and to proceed to meet those important obligations. They have worked extremely hard in many areas of the Ontario public service. They have been an example of efficiency in the major changes that have taken place. They have responded and the efficiency rating in many areas is actually improving.

Mr Derwyn Shea (High Park-Swansea): Morale is going up.

Mr Baird: "Morale is going up," the member for High Park-Swansea says.

This bill is an important part of the financial plan, where the deficit is coming down, where job creation is going up, where hope is going up, where opportunities for a brighter economic future are going up.

Mrs Ross: How many jobs did you say?

Mr Baird: I said 204,000 this year. I know the member for Hamilton West, like I, speaks out regularly for job creation initiatives. I suspect the member for High Park-Swansea, the member for Hamilton West and I are three of the leading proponents of job creation initiatives and are committed to ensuring that we change the way we do business, committed to ensuring that we can address job creation initiatives in the province, because we want to build on the successes of the government of Ontario.

The Supply Act before us today will allow the government to do just that. We look forward to a good debate on the financial issues before the province related to this Supply Act.

With that, I would pass on the rest of my time to my good colleagues in opposition. The member for St Catharines will probably get up and help us put this issue in context, which is always an important part of this debate. As always, we look forward to that debate. I also look forward to hearing my good friend M. Marchese, the member for Fort York. He'll tell us about the sightings of that endangered species in his riding, the crane, which is popping up everywhere, all along Bay Street. A lot of big enterprises in his riding are doing very well.

Mr Garry J. Guzzo (Ottawa-Rideau): They're coming back from Buffalo.

Mr Baird: The member for Ottawa-Rideau says that all these business people are coming back from Buffalo, back to Toronto. That's good news. I know the member for Fort York is pleased with the job creation and I know he's going to want to get up and talk about the economic success stories.

This bill is needed to help the government of Ontario meet its financial obligations and ensure that the taxpayers of Ontario meet their obligations to the hardworking public servants in the province. With those comments, I yield the balance of my time.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Questions and comments?

Mr Bradley: I was surprised the member for Nepean did not have a situation where he mentioned the charity casinos. I thought he may be able to help me with the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations, who refuses to say that he will deny to those communities which have turned down those casinos by referendum or plebiscite a casino in those areas.

Clearly the people have spoken through the vote, through the ballot, and yet the minister wants to use — I use this advisedly — bribes, that is, \$1,500 per video lottery terminal or electronic slot machine to offer to the municipality that's getting desperate now because of the

downloading, or the intimidation factor, which is that he gets the local charities to phone the councillors and say, "If we don't have a charity casino" — or as I call them, the new Mike Harris gambling halls — "in our community, then our charities are going to suffer." So it's the combination of the bribe and the intimidation tactic that will be used on local councillors.

I want the member for Nepean to assure me that in no municipality where they were turned down by referendum or plebiscite in the last municipal election, or any other special vote, will there be a charity casino or a new Mike Harris gambling hall. He would recognize that they will operate potentially 24 hours a day, seven days a week and will vacuum all of the discretionary money out of that community, cause great social problems, prey upon the most vulnerable, desperate and addicted people with the most seductive machines, the electronic slot machines, and also have a detrimental effect on other businesses which will not enjoy those expenditures.

Mr Lessard: It was interesting to listen to the member for Nepean talk about how successful this government's program has been, how, because of what they've been doing, they've been able to increase spending on health care in the province of Ontario. How many people in Ontario think the health care system is improving?

In the city of Windsor, I can tell you there aren't very many who do. They see what's happening with health care restructuring and they see the closing of hospitals without suitable in-home services. They have no adequate facilities to take the place of the emergency rooms that are closing. It means there are longer waits for elective surgery. The emergency rooms are in chaos. Prescription costs for seniors are going up and I don't think anybody in the Windsor area really is happy about the health care restructuring that's going on there.

We had a plan. It was called the Win-Win report. It was money that was allocated to improve health care services in the city of Windsor. When this government got elected in June 1995 it said: "No way, we don't like your plan. It doesn't matter what was promised. We're going to send in our hospital closing commission to tell you a better way to do it." Nobody in Windsor believes it's a better way.

He also talked about improvements to the school system in Nepean, trying to explain to members opposite and members who happen to be watching tonight that if you spend less on education, you're going to be improving quality. Maybe that's a signal about what this funding formula is really going to mean. We know that some are going to go up, some are going to go down, but we think spending across the board is going to be ratcheted down. This is a race to the bottom. That's what we're talking about and that's what he means about decreasing spending on education to improve quality. Nobody's buying it.

He talked about job creation as well. We want to know where they are, what kind —

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Further questions and comments? Member for Nepean, you can wrap up.

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Mr Baird: I want to thank my colleagues from St Catharines and Windsor-Riverside for their comments. I know they were just as excited as I was to see the columns in the paper the other day: "Economy Grows at Steady Clip in Third Quarter: Consumer, Business Spending Rises, as Does Personal Income..."; "Tories on Target"; and this exciting one, I know they'll be very pleased about this, "Ontario Biz Most Upbeat: Survey."

Do they want a number of reasons why they should vote for Bill 175? It permits the payment of the public service. A vote for this bill will help remunerate the hardworking folks who work in the Ontario government and around Queen's Park, hardworking public servants here in Ontario like Donna Duncan, hardworking public servants like Barbara Colantonio, like Michael Hamilton, like Erik Hempill. This will allow the government of Ontario to meet its obligation — hardworking public servants like Steve Pengally. There are a number of very good reasons to vote for this very important piece of legislation.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): I'm very pleased to get up on this debate when we're talking about supply in this province. I think everyone should understand that sooner or later, and it better be sooner rather than later, we are going to vote for this. We're not going to prolong the debate. Of course the main reason for that is that we too want to make sure the public servants in this province are going to get paid, and we want to make sure all those people who rely on the social services of this province are going to get their cheques at the proper time, particularly around Christmastime.

Certainly the opposition doesn't want to be accused of holding anybody hostage. That's why this is called at one of the very last times, because governments know that the longer they stall supply, the less debate there will be on the supply bill. They know that sooner or later the opposition will have to allow the matter to come to a vote, because obviously we want to make sure the civil servants of this province get paid and also all the people who are relying on different kinds of services.

We also know that when we discuss supply we can talk about a broad range of issues, and I will be talking about a broad range of issues. I will be splitting my time with the member for Yorkview and perhaps the member for St Catharines as well.

Mr Bradley: And the member for Renfrew North.

Mr Gerretsen: And the member for Renfrew North, who is temporarily not in this room, but he'll be right back.

There's probably no better issue that shows the complete and utter incompetence of this government than the figures that were released, you may recall, last Thursday in the darkness of the night dealing with the actual down-loading numbers for each and every municipality.

What was very interesting is that the Tory members immediately took a look at all the individual sheets for their particular municipality and said: "Net change? Zero. Hey, it's revenue-neutral. The amount that's being down-

loaded on to municipalities is exactly the same as the amount that's being uploaded with respect to education taxes to the province."

Unfortunately that's as far as they looked. If they had read the document a little bit closer, they would realize that the net effect of all of the changes of services and who pays for them in Ontario is the fact that in addition to the \$665 million that has been withdrawn from municipalities in the municipal support grant system that has operated in this province for many, many years — so municipalities are going to be out that \$665 million — they are expected to come up with another \$565 million. So in effect, municipalities, as a result of all of these changes, have been shortchanged a total of \$1.2 billion.

The government has a problem, because the Premier has said, both at the Association of Municipalities of Ontario conference and many, many times thereafter in this House, as has the Deputy Premier, the Treasurer, as has the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, that all of these transfers and changes were revenue-neutral. Now of course we know that they're not revenue-neutral, that one of two things will happen: Either the services in municipalities will be reduced if the municipalities really don't want there to be any tax increases at all or else taxes are going to have to go up.

What we have suspected all along is actually happening. That is the fact that the province expects the municipalities of Ontario to do its dirty work so that it can still get its tax cut on January 1 and have the better-off people in this province benefit to a much larger extent, and in effect the property taxes in the province of Ontario will go up. That is the tradeoff, and I think the people have to understand that.

I would just like to take an opportunity to read from an editorial in my local newspaper, the Kingston Whig-Standard, a paper that I think is well regarded throughout the province. Let me just read you some sections of this editorial. This is a paper, I might say, that hasn't always been all that much in favour of the Liberal Party of Ontario. There is another editorial as well, which I won't read, in which they feel that maybe we would have done a lot of these same things, because they somehow equate a 30% tax cut with the 1% tax cut per year that we proposed in the 1995 election. Anybody who knows anything about arithmetic knows there is a heck of a difference between a 30% tax cut and a 1% tax cut per year. A 30% tax cut is about 30 times larger.

In any event, this is what this paper has to say:

"In the cold, harsh light of a Monday morning in December, municipal administrators across Ontario sat down to review provincial downloading figures.

"Finance Minister Ernie Eves announced on Friday that downloading — the swap of services between the province and local governments — would cost municipalities an extra \$565 million. The new city of Kingston will have to cut about \$10 million from its budget next year — on top of about \$16 million in savings that have been made through amalgamation efficiencies.

"Municipal officials across the province will be turning one key phrase over and over again in their minds — 'revenue-neutral.' That's the promise made over the past year by Eves and Premier Mike Harris."

It then goes on to say, "The definition of what 'revenue-neutral' meant prior to Friday's announcement, versus what it means now, will be debated for some time."

He talks about Mayor Lastman and what he called the Premier, and I can't say that in the House. I guess you can read it in your newspaper as to what he said the Premier had done.

Mr Bradley: Does it rhyme with "choir"?

Mr Gerretsen: It rhymes with "choir," but that's about as close as I can come to it because I do not want to say anything that is not of a parliamentary nature here.

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He goes on to say: "And once again, Ontario's financially challenged municipalities are faced with either cutting services or raising taxes. Chopping nearly \$10 million from the \$216-million Kingston budget, increasing taxes by up to 12%, or a combination of the two, will be painful....

"In his letter to municipal councils last Friday, Eves wrote: 'These numbers show the realignment is fiscally neutral across the province, as promised. The province is taking on about \$3 billion of funding commitments and the municipalities are gaining control and management of about \$3 billion worth of new responsibilities.' Still, there remains the small matter of \$565 million."

Then he says, "Untruths, damned untruths and statistics" — actually, he used another word — "in this case, none of them add up to something called 'revenue-neutral.'"

The same thing was said in the St Catharines Standard: Semantics of downloading don't obscure the sorry, sorry truth.

I guess the thing that I find surprising about this whole aspect of it, as we have seen so often with this government, is the fact that they are really being intellectually not honest. Why can't they just admit to the people of Ontario, "We have to find another \$565 million and you're going to have to pay for it"?

Interjection.

Mr Gerretsen: Well, you wouldn't want me to say it now because you'd hold that I wasn't parliamentary in my speech, and I certainly wouldn't want to do that.

The point of the matter is quite simply this: The people of Ontario have to clearly understand that \$1.2 billion more services have been transferred to them, or less revenues will be taken in by municipalities from provincial sources.

I guess we will see in the long run who is right. To my own calculation, we will probably find out some time in May when people start getting their second tax bills. I would think that in most municipalities the first tax bill that goes out some time in January, February or March of next year will probably take a percentage of last year's tax bill so that people still won't really know what the effect is going to be. But I would say that probably by

May or so, or June at the latest, people will have a clear understanding as to whether or not in their individual case they will be paying more in property taxes than before.

That is what I refer to as the Tory math, that somehow a \$1.2-billion download can still be called "revenue-neutral."

But there is also a tremendous amount of incompetence going on. I have here a lower-tier detail sheet for Frontenac Island township. This is a township that is newly created and made up of Howe Island and Wolfe Island, with a total population of about 1,500 to 1,600 people. The total tax revenue in real estate taxes on both of these islands probably amounts to about \$800,000 or \$900,000. According to this community reinvestment fund, the 1998 allocation shows that for residential education property taxes, \$3.7 million has been attributed to these 1,600 people living on these two islands.

You may recall that the member for Essex South had exactly the same thing happen with respect to Pelee Island. I believe in his case it was something like two point something million for about 200 or 300 people.

When I asked for a clarification from the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, a member of this House, a man I have the highest regard for, I will say — I served with him municipally on AMO for a number of years — said, "Well, there's been a mistake." He said the same thing to Mr Crozier. "Oh, there's been a mistake on your forms too."

When I spoke to some of the financial people in Kingston, they said: "Well, there have been more mistakes than that. Did you know that the ambulance services for all of the county of Frontenac, including the city of Kingston, have just been allocated against what used to be the county's budget and none of these costs have been attributed to the city of Kingston budget?" Today, Mayor Gary Bennett himself, who is going to be the new mayor of the newly reconstructed city of Kingston, which takes in the former Kingston township and Pittsburgh township as well as the city of Kingston, said to me, "We obviously have to pay our ambulance bills," and in the download figures that they were handed last Thursday there was no mention at all about the ambulance services.

In other cases I have heard, for example, that social housing costs have either been attributed entirely to the county and none to the city in the county, or entirely to the city and none to the county at all. The point is that these figures aren't even correct. They are either totally manufactured, some have been left off — nobody really knows. That is just one aspect of the incompetence of this particular government.

The other issue I want to talk about deals with the incompetence in the whole area of health services. We have all heard stories about the restructuring committee going around the province and recommending that about 44 different hospitals so far be closed. We all know that all you have to do is walk into a hospital and you realize that the nursing service that's available isn't there the way it was three or four or five years ago. In my own case, one of my wife's relatives is in the hospital currently. They

almost prefer to have family members stay there so that the nurses are freer to look after the other patients.

You may recall it wasn't all that long ago when visiting hours in a hospital were severely restricted. You were told to be there for maybe no more than two hours in the afternoon and no more than two hours in the evening. Now, in serious situations, they want family members to stay there because they realize they just don't have the nursing care available any more.

That is a really sorry indictment on our health care system. If there was one thing we were known for and one thing that really added to our quality of life in Ontario, it was the fact that we had good quality health care for all of our citizens. It was universally accessible and available to anyone who needed it, and it didn't matter at all how much money you had in your pocket before you got those services. As we have seen them deteriorate over the years, you wonder what is going to happen to our system. Is privatized health care around the corner, and what is it going to do to our public health care system?

Interjection.

Mr Gerretsen: I see that the member for Ottawa-Rideau, the former judge and heckler extraordinaire in this House, can't accept being told these truths. All I would say to you, sir, as you go home to Ottawa-Rideau this Christmas and as you spend the next three or four weeks there, is go and talk to people who have had anything to do with hospital care over the last couple of years or so and ask them —

Interjection: You're asking him to talk to people?

Mr Gerretsen: Yes, I know I'm asking something extraordinary; I'm asking him to talk to some of his constituents. Go and talk to them and see what they think about hospital care and how that compares to the hospital care that was available to them five years ago or 10 years ago.

Hon Noble Villeneuve (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, minister responsible for francophone affairs): Oh, Bill 92 and Bill 94: That's what you're talking about.

Mr Gerretsen: The Minister of Agriculture has an awful lot to say. That's the same minister who waited until the very last moment to bring back two bills, one that was introduced a year or so ago; we started second reading in September.

Hon Mr Villeneuve: Come on.

Mr Gerretsen: Well, come on. Why didn't you bring it back, sir? In any event, I'm a great believer in the old saying: Thou protest too much, sir.

Hon Mr Villeneuve: Bill 92 and Bill 94 is what you're talking about.

The Deputy Speaker: Minister of Agriculture, come to order.

Mr Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, you heard today the member for London Centre ask a question as to what's happened to mental health services in the Kingston area. I asked a similar question of the Minister of Health last week, because something really extraordinary happened there a week or so ago. A centre that has been almost like

a home to about 150 people who have had mental health problems was abruptly closed. Two individuals came down from the Ministry of Health, didn't talk to the residents at all, put the locks on the building at 4:30 in the afternoon and said, "This is closed, finished," an absolutely extraordinary situation.

This action has been condemned in our local paper by the editorial staff of the Kingston Whig-Standard. There have been letters to the editor written about this. I can tell you honestly that in my 25 years in public service in one way or another, I have never seen as bad an action as was taken in this particular case, where for no apparent reason the locks were changed on a building so that people who lived in the relatively immediate neighbourhood no longer had that home environment available to them in order for them to meet, in order for them to socialize, in order for them to again get their self-esteem and their self-confidence. As of today, that matter has not as yet been resolved.

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The minister has been saying the money is still available and it has now gone from agency A to agency B. I say I am not interested in the turf war between different agencies. I'm interested in only one thing, and that is to make sure those services are reinstated to the individuals as quickly as possible, that the door is opened up.

We've got an OHIP building in Kingston. We've got many people who work for the Ministry of Health. If need be, put one of them in charge, open the building, ask the employees to come back. If you think there are any kind of irregularities, or whatever you might think — I have no idea — put somebody in charge and make sure that environment is available again for those 150 to 160 people.

This is not a laughing matter. This is a matter in which we have taken the most vulnerable in our society and we've literally locked the door on them. The strange aspect of this whole thing is quite simply this: We give the worst possible tenants in the province of Ontario a month's notice before they have to move out of a building. Then of course you have to go through a whole process and the tenant may not get out. Here in this particular case, nobody was given any notice whatsoever. They just came around and changed the locks on the door. I think it's a disgraceful action.

I understand the minister wants to do something about it. I say to her and I say to the government, there are some very simple solutions. Put somebody from the Ministry of Health in charge — you've got those people there — and ask the local community to come up with a new board, a new organization, to actually run this operation. You will be doing the people who are involved in these services, who need those services on a day-to-day basis, a big favour.

As a matter of fact, our city council last night, by a unanimous vote — and there are many differences of opinion on our city council in Kingston, people of both the right persuasion and the left persuasion and everything.

Hon Mr Villeneuve: Where do you stand?

Mr Gerretsen: I stand with the people. I stand with those patients. I stand with those people who need those services.

I know that sometimes in ministries you can get so hung up with all the technicalities etc that you don't realize what really needs to be done. What really needs to be done here is to appoint somebody, open the door, let those services be available again for those people. I am prepared to work with anybody in the government, including the minister, to see that this happens and gets opened as quickly as possible. I'll even see that you get credit for it if you do.

Anyway, they passed a resolution:

"That the Kingston city council petition the Minister of Health to immediately re-establish the Kingston Community Counselling Centre and the Kingston Clubhouse Activity Centre; and

"Be it further resolved that the Kingston city council petition the Minister of Health to consult with the clients and their families, caregivers, mental health agencies and other interested citizens towards a plan which will best serve the ongoing mental health needs of our community."

Carried unanimously by all the members of city council.

I know that sometimes the whole notion of government may get too much and it may get too complicated etc. There are sometimes fairly easy solutions to these problems that will serve everybody's best needs, particularly the best needs of the people who need those services. So I say it was an incompetent act, to say the least, for somebody to take this kind of drastic action when other solutions were possible.

You are the government that's in charge of what's happening this area. You were incompetent with respect to the figures that you're putting out about the municipal downloading and you showed a callous disrespect for the feelings of those individuals who are involved in this service.

Hon Mr Villeneuve: John, be fair.

Mr Gerretsen: I try to be fair. I always try to be fair, sir, in each and every way. But the ministry has had an opportunity to do something about this problem now for 10 days and nothing has happened, sir, so I'm pleading with you to make something happen. We can make it happen if we work on the solution collectively.

I could go on for a long time. There really is so much to say.

Mr Guzzo: Don't stop, please. Come on. We paid our money, we want the whole show.

Mr Gerretsen: The member says, "Don't stop." Let's talk about some of the other issues, then. You were a judge in court, sir.

The Deputy Speaker: Could you speak to the Chair, please.

Mr Gerretsen: I should address my comments to the Speaker.

I wonder, though, if the member for Ottawa-Rideau has had an opportunity to look at the 1997 annual report of the Provincial Auditor, particularly in those areas — I've brought this up a few times now, but I feel I will have to

again because something has to be done about it, that is, the whole courts administration program.

Mr Guzzo: Did they mention Patti Starr this year?

Hon Mr Villeneuve: No, Patti Starr is not in there.

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr Gerretsen: The people of Ontario should understand that currently there are 225,000 criminal charges pending in the Provincial Division, which happens to be the same number that were outstanding back in 1990 when the Askov decision was made. Fully 70,000 of these charges are more than eight months old, so they could possibly be subject to an Askov ruling.

I say to the government, why don't you follow the recommendations of the Provincial Auditor and do something about it? The Provincial Auditor states, "Despite the initiatives taken to date, the following chart indicates that backlogs have been increasing since 1994 and have the potential to develop into a situation similar to the one which resulted in the Askov decision." He is saying that the provincial government "can exercise considerable control in ensuring courtroom availability and providing adequate information to the judiciary and crown attorneys."

Something has to be done with this backlog. Do something about it. You are a former member of the judiciary. I'm sure you have tremendous influence with the Attorney General. Perhaps you could even show him some of the practical things you used to do in Ottawa to help him resolve this situation. I wish you would do something, sir.

The other thing that I find absolutely fascinating for a government that knows the cost of everything — you seem to know the cost of everything but the value of absolutely nothing in our society. There are \$139 million worth of fines outstanding under the Highway Traffic Act. You like to pretend that you run government in a businesslike way. What I can't for the life of me understand is why you aren't trying to collect this \$139 million. It's very interesting that 16,000 individuals have unpaid fines for five or more offences and 15,800 have at least \$1,000 owing. The interesting thing is that the ministry knows where these people are.

Mr Douglas B. Ford (Etobicoke-Humber): The judges refuse to —

Mr Gerretsen: No, sir, the judges have nothing to do with this. You can garnish these people's wages. You can garnish their bank accounts. You can put a lien against their real estate and property. What does the Provincial Auditor say? He states: "The payment notices from the ministry warn that, in addition to the licence suspension, failure to pay fines can result in other measures, such as... informing the credit bureau...requiring banks to deduct the money owing from the person's bank account or registering a lien against the person's real property. We noted" — now you listen to this, sir — "that none of these measures have been initiated by the ministry."

This is unbelievable. Why aren't you doing that? That way, we may get some of the \$139 million that's owing to you and me as taxpayers of this province into the funds of the province so that money can be used either to reduce

the deficit for the year or pay it on the debt or maybe even put it out in different programs or whatever. But right now that money is out there and we're not doing anything about it. That's under the Highway Traffic Act.

2140

The other one that's very interesting is that there is something like \$316 million owing in the collection of fines. Can you imagine that over \$200 million are fines that have been outstanding for longer than two years? It's truly unbelievable, so I say do something about it. Have the Attorney General do something about it. Have the member from Ottawa-Rideau, with his tremendous amount of experience, do something about it. You're so eager to talk about welfare fraud and various other things, but this is the one area you're not doing anything about. Why aren't you doing anything about that?

There really is so much to say and so little time to say it in. I will be turning this over momentarily to my colleague from Yorkview, because I'm sure that he too has much to say about this.

I would like to finish by saying that, yes, some people in this province are better off than they were two and a half years ago, but there are also many people who are worse off. Probably the most stunning statistic, which the government has not revealed because it obviously feels this would somehow negate everything else it talks about, is the fact that we actually have more people unemployed in this province now than we did two and a half years ago. The Minister of Finance's own documentation clearly shows that in June 1995 there were 499,000 people unemployed in Ontario; in November of this year, according to your own documents, there are 502,000 people unemployed.

We are concerned to make sure that everybody in Ontario, to the best of their ability, is able to make their way in life through work. Most people want useful work, and the fact that more than half a million people are unemployed, more people than when you took office in 1995, is a shame and it's an indictment on your government. With that, I will turn the balance of my time over to the member for Yorkview.

Mr Mario Sergio (Yorkview): Let me answer first the comment that was made that we should be fair. I think the member for Kingston and The Islands was more than fair in his comments. We on this side have been recognized to be reasonable in our approach when we have approached the government with our many amendments on a number of bills. We have been very reasonable in this House with our criticism of the government. We have applauded the government and have voted with the government when they had sensible legislation. But we have been actively engaging in forceful debate in this House on those matters where we were divided, where we had views different from the government, not necessarily on some of the things they have done but on how they have been doing things. When we hear them lauding their own government, that they have done this and they have done that, have brought down the deficit to just below \$6 billion while the debt is going higher and higher, there is nothing

to toast. I think you have to measure the accomplishments of your government on how you have accomplished those cuts, on whose backs. That's how you measure the success of your government and the program.

If the government were to look back at the two and a half years they have been in power and would honestly realize how they have come to reduce the balance of our budget, they would see that they did it on the backs of the most vulnerable people in our province. I don't think anyone can be proud of that particular record.

They have failed and they have alienated the workers in our province, they have alienated our parents, the teachers, the students, the nurses, the doctors, the seniors and everybody else. So who can argue that those programs were a success? I don't think so. Can you believe now that school boards are starting to charge Brownies, Scouts and seniors for the use of schools? This is unheard of, that now schools, in order to compensate for the cuts imposed upon them by the provincial government, will have to start charging Brownies, Scouts and seniors for community space when they already have been paying for those facilities through the nose.

I wonder what would happen if the local municipality, the city here in Metropolitan Toronto, for example, were to say to some of my seniors' groups, "If you want to come into the school and use a room or use a community centre, you have to pay." I think they would be lynched. I think the local councillors or the mayor would be run out of the place, because those are the people who have been paying for those facilities.

How can we stand by and not criticize a government that is going to now let the school boards, strapped, charge those parents for the use of the schools by their own children to have evening programs for the Brownies and the Boy Scouts or seniors' programs? I don't think any local politician could withstand the ire of those taxpayers.

Indeed, if you're trying to balance the books by the year 2000-01 with all the cuts you have done, on whose back have you done it? At whose expense have you done it? Certainly, the seniors, the students, the tenants, the single wage earner. How can we speak on behalf of our kids, the ones who are going to elementary school, if you will, college, university? Not only are they being faced with a big increase in tuition fees for them to get through the school years, but then they are faced with \$25,000 or \$30,000 if and when they come out of school or college. What a beginning, what a wonderful opportunity we give our young people. After many years of sacrifices, not only by the students, but single parents perhaps or their parents, with all the cuts and expenses — and life is getting more difficult on a daily basis — finally they have managed to send a kid to school, college or university, and now they are saying, "Now we are out of school, we have finished, congratulations," and now you have a big debt. So first you have to worry, worry about paying the debt, looking for a job, getting settled, getting on with a family or whatever. Is this what we are passing on?

We cannot pat the government on the back and say: "Yes, your cuts have been very helpful. Yes, we can

applaud your cuts." We cannot. There are ways of doing things, ways of accomplishing the goals that a government sets out to accomplish, and there other ways as well. Certainly the ways this government has chosen to accomplish its goals are not the right ways. It is not to do it on the backs of the students, it is not to do it on the backs of seniors.

2150

Did you hear that when seniors go to a pharmacy, they're told, "You already have to pay, as of now, for April 1, 1998," an increase of over 10% on their drug benefit program? The government, in order to get the money they need to satisfy the 30% tax cut for the rich and famous, is telling the seniors that as of April 1, 1998, the drug benefit program is going to go up from \$100 to \$112 for seniors, for those who make \$24,000. Isn't that nice?

We are telling universities and colleges, "Go ahead, increase the fees up to 20%." Isn't that nice? First we are doing the unloading and then we are telling the same institutions: "Go ahead and raise taxes. Go ahead and install user fees or increase your user fees." Is this the logical way for a provincial government to conduct the business of the province on behalf of its people: just pass the buck and let somebody else do the dirty work? I really don't think so.

What are we going to say to junior kindergarten? What are we going to say to a very successful program for adult education? What are we going to say to those people? "That's it, you're on your own." This is exactly what the government is doing.

I only want to take a few more minutes. I was hoping to have a couple of hours, and now those two hours have been shrunk to about 15 minutes. I want to make a couple of other very important points.

The government must have realized that in our nation, and especially in our province, we used to pride ourselves on the universality of the health care system. It was something we cherished, something about which people from outside our country would come here and say, "You have the best system in the world."

Hon Mr Villeneuve: And they came here to siphon it off, eh?

Mr Sergio: This is very unfortunate. I hear a minister of the government say, "And they came here to suck our system." That is a most unfortunate comment because it comes from a very respected member of the government. I find comments like that — our country has opened its arms to people from all over the world. If Canada is what it is today, it is thanks to those people, thanks to the people who came to Canada to make a home. I agree that we have to be very watchful, that we have to see that those people who would come here — and it's not only the people who come here. We have people who were born in this country who abuse the system, so let's not download now on some other special group of people our problems.

The minister who made the comment was on the bench, perhaps on this side, when the now Premier made a comment saying: "It's not an income problem. It's how you

spend the money. You're getting lots of money; it's how you spend it." It is so ironic that in a time that is booming, with lots of money coming in — we heard the Minister of Finance yesterday and the other day say we are doing better than expected. As a matter of fact, he was blowing the horn in this House and outside saying that instead of \$6 billion, we are at below \$6 billion in order to balance our books. That's wonderful. If that is the case, why don't you then stop downloading on the local municipalities? They keep saying, "Yes, we only have one taxpayer; therefore we have to cut more." My goodness, if this is what they really intend to do, if they don't do it, somebody else has to do it.

It is incredible that the government does not read newsprint like everybody else. Let me quote, because I don't want to be misunderstood, like somebody thinks it's coming from me. This is today's Star. This is what it says here: "Premier Mike Harris did not keep his word." Somebody else would use other words, and saying so is the mayor of London, Ms Haskett. She doesn't say that because she wants to say that; she says that because she has good reason. They were fine, as were the cities of Ottawa, London, Windsor, Hamilton.

But do you know why they are so upset now? Because, for example, the city of Ottawa had zero increases for three years and now they're being stung by the provincial government with a loss of \$60 billion — "billions," wow — \$60 million. What are you going to say to the people of Ottawa when they had terrific management by their local government, their local municipality, with zero increases for three years and now we have big daddy, the provincial government, saying to the local municipality, "Well, we are going to download on you a number of other services to the extent of \$60 million"? Wouldn't you feel infuriated? Wouldn't you feel hurt if you were a taxpayer?

The mayor of London, Ms Haskett says, "'We are not only frustrated...we were infuriated,' she said yesterday of the budget cut of \$13.9 million imposed on London."

Hon Mr Villeneuve: You are still with her?

Mr Sergio: Absolutely. "Transferring much of the costs of such services as welfare, public housing, homes for the aged, child care, ambulances and public health to the municipalities 'has no foundation in fairness.'" That is a heck of a good comment. It doesn't make any sense, because somebody has to pay. You know who pays? Always at the bottom line.

When we speak of being fair, this is what we talk about. Cutting is not difficult. Any minister can say to their bureaucrats, "I want you to cut me another \$50 million," or "I want to cut another couple of hundred million dollars." They'll do it. Cutting is not difficult. Difficult is to provide the people of Ontario with the quality of service, acceptable service, such as the ones that they used to know. If you were to approach anyone in our province and say, "We won't close the hospitals, but we're going to charge you an extra \$50 a year," I would say that every resident in Ontario would agree with that. The cuts are unnecessary.

Oh, yes, they are necessary for only one reason: to provide the funds necessary to give to those who don't need them. Absolutely. When the government insists on saying, "Well, we are providing the same service for those who require it," let me tell you that is not so. You cannot provide a health care system when there is none available. You cannot provide the same assistance when that facility is not available. You cannot provide that assistance when accessibility is not available. You cannot tell to any resident in Ontario, especially the seniors community — and everyone has been saying today that it's on the rise — 10 miles away that their facility that used to be in their area is now as accessible as it was before. I don't call that accessibility or availability.

As I was saying before, a 50% increase in tuition fees in three years is a lot for our young people. It's a shame we have a government that is turning its back on the people it should be assisting the most.

2200

As I said before, first they do the downloading — I don't know with what faith we can have the Minister of Municipal Affairs in the House — and then outside he says, "Well, if a municipality needs any help, we are going to give them a bridge loan, bridge financing, interest-free for a couple of years." Isn't that wonderful? Aren't they ashamed to face the Ontario people and offend them in such a way? They're saying: "We are going to make such big cuts that the local municipality won't be able to afford so many services, but if they want to provide those services, they can come to us and we'll give them the money. We'll give them a loan." It's their money. Why should the government force the local municipality to invoke even more cuts or reduce more services or say, "Well, give us a loan"? I don't think that's the way they should govern.

As a matter of fact — and I come from municipal council, with some experience — municipalities are not allowed to run a deficit, according to the Municipal Act, which is given to local municipalities by the provincial government. But now it's more convenient for the provincial government to say: "Go ahead, run a deficit, even borrow. We'll give you the money interest-free for two years." Then what happens after that? I don't think this is the way to do business in Ontario, balancing the books in such a way. I don't think so.

I want to leave a little bit of time because my colleagues have been most generous allocating time for me, but let me just make a couple of points. This came to mind when we were dealing with Bill 98. We had a few days of public hearings. Wherever we went, from city to city, individuals, groups, developers, whoever, said, "This is not good for us." No one said to the government, "Yes, this is good for us." You know what? Bill 98 gives carte blanche to a land developer to go into a community and the only thing they have to do is bring in the roads, bring in the water, get their money and get out. The local municipality can't say, "You have to provide some recreational facilities for the new occupants." The government says, "Let them go to the existing facility." Do you know

what this is going to do, on top of everything else, let alone the expenses? It is going to pit small municipalities against bigger municipalities, local councils against regional councils, community against community.

Are we supposed to look after the people of our province in our community? Bill 98 allows developers to go in, rake in the money and then let the problem be solved by the local municipalities and the existing residents. We don't think that is a good way of doing business in Ontario.

With that, I will allow my friend and colleague the member for St Catharines to speak. He's got a couple of hours reduced to about seven minutes. With your indulgence, Madam Speaker, I thank you and I pass it along to my friend the member for St Catharines.

Mr Bradley: Indeed there is a certain amount of time with which to deal with a number of issues this evening, but let me zero in on a couple I'm very concerned about.

I heard the member for Scarborough West today, one of the crime commissioners, talking about the banks and the great profits the banks have been making. He was being very critical of this. My concern is that at the very time that major banks are making unprecedented profits, they are shrinking the workforce. I am very concerned when I hear about that happening. I wonder where people are going to work. If the bank is losing money, if the profit margin is very small and there's a lot of competition out there, it's still regrettable that people lose their jobs, but it's more understandable.

I know, for instance, that a lot of banks are now reducing the number of hours which they serve the public; not the Province of Ontario Savings Office, which this government is trying to privatize and turn over to the private sector, but rather several of the large banks. They'll have signs up that will say: "It will be cheaper if you do this at the machine. We think the machines are more convenient." They keep trying to encourage us to use their technology instead of dealing with the people who work for them, people who often don't make very much money when you compare their jobs to those of others.

I notice that a bank I deal with in St Catharines, which is the largest-volume bank in Ontario outside of Toronto — in other words, the busiest bank — is now reducing its hours once again. I applauded the banks, because some in this House will remember that years ago the banks were open from 10 am to 3 pm. I don't know who could get there, but I know there were a lot of people who felt like firing a brick through the window when the bank was closed. I was never one of those, but there were people who felt that way.

Then they opened up the banks, and banks started to open from 8 am to 8 pm to serve real people. On Saturdays, they were open from maybe 9 am to 5 pm. Then a couple of years ago they started to shrink those hours, and now I notice that I received a banking notice that effective January 12, 1998, a major bank in the city of St Catharines is reducing its hours even more. I think that's a step backward for a couple of reasons. First of all, if you look at it for employment opportunities, it means more and

more people are getting fewer and fewer hours, as temporary or part-time employees. This does not bode well for our economy. The reason is the services. I think there are still a lot of people out there — I know many of them are seniors — who like to deal with an individual; they don't want to deal with a machine. It's not that they're intimidated by machines; they like to be able to discuss their banking requirements with actual people.

It seems to me that when banks and other major corporations are making unprecedented profits, there is some kind of obligation to maintain an employment force out there. I'm not suggesting that government can dictate to the private sector in this regard, but I remember the Premier went over to Davos in Switzerland. The person who sponsors that conference for provincial premiers, politicians, business people in particular, put out the challenge to people who were there and asked the question about what jobs are going to be available to people in the future. I hope the banks will reconsider that particular option.

By the way, I heard a question in the House the other day from a government member to the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations. I think we should be wary of some of the scams that are going on, and that was the question that was asked. There's a scam, for instance, involving offices that's taking place out there. People are being contacted recently by companies offering toner and office supplies at special prices. When the bill comes in, the prices may be 50% to 300% higher than usual and the toner may be substandard quality, which could damage equipment.

2210

Here are some common approaches that I want to warn people about that are used by sales reps to trick people over the phone and how our Ministry of Consumer and Commercial Relations suggests you respond to them.

Someone calls from a market research company and asks for the make and model of your office equipment. This is a typical setup call for the sales pitch which follows. Don't give out this information over the phone. The authorized suppliers already will have this information.

Someone calls and offers an incredible deal on supplies but you must act now to take advantage of the special prices. The advice from the Ministry of Consumer and Commercial Relations: Don't buy anything. Ask for the person's name and phone number so you can check that they are a legitimate office supplier. Office suppliers, the regular ones whom you deal with, do not contact clients to solicit sales.

Another one: You receive goods that you didn't order or that you realize are a scam. Immediately call the distributor, advise them that you are not accepting the goods, you will not pay for them and you want them removed at their expense. Give them a time limit to pick up the goods or you will dispose of them.

These companies can be reported, by the way, to the OPP Project Phonebusters squad at 705-495-8501. That's for the Project Phonebusters of the Ontario Provincial Police: 705 is the area code, 495-8501. This is a bit of a

public service announcement because this is happening around the province.

Often when you confront these people, they are completely rude to the staff of the office who contacts them. They try to bully and intimidate those people and insult those people. I hope those people who are perpetrating these scams in the province know that a lot of people are watching, and a lot who watch this channel tonight know what's going on and they can contact our consumer and commercial relations department which can provide advice and assistance in this regard.

I would love to get into the topic of gambling, but I don't have that opportunity. I want to make a pitch on behalf of private members in this House. I know there are a number of good private members' bills — I see about a dozen from the Liberals right now, there are several from the Conservatives and New Democrats — that are worthy of consideration for carryover to the new session. I hope all members will prevail upon their House leaders, including myself, to try to have many of these bills carried over so that the individual member does have a meaningful role in this House.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments?

Mr Lessard: I want to make a few comments about the presentations that have been made by the members for Kingston and The Islands, Yorkview and St Catharines. I really think that they hit the nail on the head on a lot of the issues that we're debating tonight with respect to Bill 175, a bill that this government waited until the last possible moment, almost, to introduce to ensure that public servants in the province of Ontario are able to get paid. In fact they waited so long to introduce this bill that we don't even have a copy of it on our desks so we can use it for the purposes of debating here tonight.

The members talked about the impact of this government's tax cut and what it means to the provision of important public services like health care and education as well, and also mentioned job creation and how this government is way behind in creating those 725,000 jobs that they promised in the Common Sense Revolution. Where are these jobs?

The member for St Catharines especially mentioned the jobs in banks. Maybe there are some jobs that are being created, but there are certainly a lot of jobs that are being lost at the same time. We see that in the banking business, a business that is incredibly profitable right now. A lot of these sorts of businesses that said they were going to create jobs as a result of the free trade agreement or the North American free trade agreement — they said, "Just pass those treaties and we'll create lots more jobs" — are eliminating thousands of jobs in Canada and in Ontario.

I was a bit disappointed that he didn't say anything more about that tax-generating scheme that is going to bring in revenue to help fund the Tory tax cut, and that was with respect to casinos in the Niagara region. He didn't say anything about that, but he may have some further opportunities later on tonight.

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): I want to commend my colleagues the members for Kingston and

The Islands, Yorkview and St Catharines on their fine presentations this evening. I think if one was to sum up what the three members were talking about, and to sum up, perhaps, what this government has been up to in the last two and a half years, it would be the creation of New Jersey in Ontario. This is the Christine Todd Whitman Ontario. It's a province which is going to be funded by higher property taxes; it's a province which is going to be funded from revenues from casinos, from gambling; and it's a province where people at the top end of the scale will pay far less in income tax. It is exactly what's going on in New Jersey, and that should be no surprise to anybody. The Common Sense Revolution document is an absolute lift of the Republican document in New Jersey. What we are seeing here is what was promised to us in many ways. They just did not have the courage to stand up and say, "We're bringing New Jersey to Ontario."

If that's what you want, you can always move to New Jersey, but I think Ontarians have different values. I think the values that we have in terms of our health care, in terms of our education, in terms of our standard of living are far different.

When our critic for municipal affairs talked about the most recent revenue-neutral downloading, I think he illustrates what's happening all across my particular constituency of Algoma-Manitoulin. While I believe most communities will be able to cope in the short term, when the transition fund goes, there will be huge tax increases — they are not absorbable — and they will go, funny thing, just after the next election.

The Deputy Speaker: Further questions and comments? Somebody from the Liberal Party who spoke can sum up.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: I'm sorry, I missed you. Further questions and comments, the member for Northumberland.

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, for recognizing me. Just a couple of comments in recognition. I heard the comments about the CSR, the Common Sense Revolution, and where it came from. I wanted the honourable member to realize where the red book came from, that so much of the red book was copied from the Common Sense Revolution. I think it's only fair that he would understand that the content of the red book was copied from the Common Sense Revolution. To leave that unresponded to I think would be unfair to the Liberals to not know the content of it.

I recognize him for seeing good information, a good platform and picking up from it and using it to best advantage. It didn't work very well for them, but I compliment them for their foresight in being able to see where a good platform was coming from and some of the positioning. So much of what this government has been doing, I'm sure that you're very pleased, you can go through the red book and check off the things that you copied from the Common Sense Revolution and see that we're following through on those activities. I just know that you're absolutely thrilled.

Thank you, Madam Speaker, for the chance to be able to respond and explain to them about the red book and the Common Sense Revolution.

The Deputy Speaker: Further questions and comments? Okay, the member for St Catharines.

Mr Bradley: I'm sorry to hear the member for Northumberland living in the past so much, worried about old documents that he seems to be obsessed with, but I understand that he's going to raise that. That's fair game on an evening of this kind.

I want to thank the member for Windsor-Riverside, who understood many of the problems that I was raising, and my friend from Algoma. I do want to say this evening that we have a new Minister of Health now. Perhaps with the polls that are rolling in that indicate the government's performance in the field of health care is somewhat less than what the population is looking for, the government will now reconsider the closing of the five hospitals in the Niagara Peninsula, that is, the Hotel Dieu Hospital in St Catharines, the West Lincoln Memorial Hospital in Grimsby, the Niagara-on-the-Lake hospital, the Fort Erie hospital, which is Douglas Memorial, and the Port Colborne hospital. We need all of those hospitals, as well as the others that have not been under the axe, to provide services.

If people have either been in the hospital, had family or relatives or friends in the hospital or work in the hospital, they recognize that there's a drastic difference today in the quality of service that's able to be offered. Our hospitals want to offer top-notch service, they want to be clean and they want to be able to cater to the needs of the patients. However, in the Niagara region, for instance, the government has removed \$44 million from hospital funding. Ask anybody who has been in a hospital 10 years ago and today, and they will tell you there's a substantial difference in the quality of service.

I believe all people in this province would support the appropriate investment of funds, the restoration of funds to hospitals so they can carry out their responsibilities. I make a plea again on behalf of the people of the Niagara region to keep our hospitals open. As Dr David Foot, author of *Boom, Bust and Echo*, said at Brock University when asked what Mike Harris shouldn't do, he said, "Mike Harris shouldn't close hospitals."

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The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Questions and comments? Further debate?

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): I'll be dividing my time with the members for Sault Ste Marie, Windsor-Riverside and Algoma. I welcome the folks who are watching this late show. It's live; it's not a repeat show. It's important for people to know that we're on until approximately 12 o'clock tonight. Hopefully, they'll tune in and stay with us for the rest of the time.

I want to speak briefly to Bill 175 because the member for Nepean gave us the context of Bill 175. We are indeed supportive of this because we wouldn't want our civil servants not to be paid, especially those who are still surviving the Conservative government. So many have left

— involuntarily, I would add. We want to support the people who have stayed fully loyal to this province; perhaps not necessarily to this government. We are in support of that.

But I want to speak to the context that the member for Nepean spoke to. I suspect those of you watching will understand that we have a different interpretation of reality. The member spoke in his introductory remarks by saying: "We are reducing spending. We are reducing government." Presumably it's too big. "We are also cutting taxes and spending dollars wisely." That's what I want to talk about, these themes, because they are important in terms of understanding this government and the *modus vivendi* of their life on the other side.

Canada is being dismantled. It's being dismantled, I argue, at the national level as well as at the provincial level, and it is being done with the support of the corporate elite, the powerful elite who drive these folks. They are helping to change our culture in this society. We're seeing a cultural, political, economic shift that these fine Tories are helping to implement, with great assistance from those folks who've got the big bucks. They're doing it well.

They're helping to transform our relatively collectivist, sharing and democratic society into one that is individualistic, profit-driven and corporate-dominated. It's a revolution without a pause. These people are committed to this type of revolution, this type of individualistic, profit-driven and corporate-dominated revolution, and they will not pause. These folks have been at it ever since they got elected. I don't think they sleep at night. I don't think Premier Harris sleeps.

"Our country is being redesigned to serve a small, powerful elite and to fit it into a financially fluid global society," says Kathleen O'Hara, the writer I'm quoting here. She says, "Taking shape is a virtually borderless world dominated by transnational corporations" — the member for Nepean and the Speaker certainly would appreciate this one — "the top 200 of whom already control more assets than 182 countries. It is a world where nations are nothing more than 'economies,' where government leaders behave like 'chief executive officers,' and citizens are reduced to the status of 'clients' or 'consumers.'" That's what we're witnessing in this country and in this province. The Tories are willing recipients of this ideology and willing to be the instrument of this cultural shift. They're doing it to us at an incredibly rapid pace.

This is changing globally. It isn't just happening here in this province or Canada; it's happening everywhere. We've got the International Monetary Fund that is contributing towards this cultural economic shift to the extent that it has what is called a "structural adjustment program" that consists of paring down government, privatizing national assets, weakening social programs, opening up investments and liberalizing trade. Does that sound familiar to you guys? It should, because this International Monetary Fund group behaves no differently than you fine individuals here, you 81, controlling this great province of ours.

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: I know, Mr Ford, you've got a problem with this. I know that because you don't want the truth to be told. You would prefer that people remain as in the dark as possible as you implement the strategies for these small, powerful élites. Imagine, 200 companies controlling more wealth and more assets than 182 countries put together. Mr Ford smiles because he likes that. He drools at this thought, because their agenda, the International Monetary Fund, is your agenda. It is the same thing.

You haven't invented it, you're the instruments of that change. You are doing it hand in hand with corporate control. The control corporations exercise over public discourse through the kinds of information they disseminate makes it impossible for the few of us who disagree with the kinds of stuff you guys are doing. It makes it difficult for us and we are condemned as blasphemous. We are condemned as left-leaning individuals who don't have a firm grip of this type of economy you boys are trying to control.

You've got the big boys, you've got the corporations and you've got — let me tell you, former Minister of Education — a whole group of powerful friends. I want to read you that list, because they're big and they're powerful and they control the information through their power. Here are some of the principal agents of the corporate agenda in Canada. Minister of Education, I'm going to read them out to you.

Interjections.

Mr Marchese: Speaker, is there too much noise in the House, do you think? Do you want to control that, or no?

The Speaker: I do want to control it.

Mr Marchese: I appreciate that.

The Speaker: You're right. Member for Etobicoke-Humber and member for Algoma.

Interjections.

The Speaker: You're not in your seat, member for Etobicoke-Humber. Let's try and maintain decorum so the member for Fort York can get his comments on the record.

Mr Baird: Bring the two of them under control, Speaker.

The Speaker: The member for Nepean, you've obviously gone over the edge there. Just gather yourself back in.

Mr Marchese: I appreciate your assistance because you must have observed that I have a cold. It makes it a bit difficult to shout over the protestations of those individuals on the other side who obviously disagree with the things I'm telling them.

Here are the principal agents of the corporate agenda in Canada. There are 10 of them. Well, there are probably more, but these are the 10 biggies.

Mr Lessard: The top 10.

Mr Marchese: Member for Nepean, the top 10, here you go:

"(1) The Alliance of Manufacturers and Exporters of Canada (AMEC). The Canadian Manufacturers' Association merged last year with the Canadian Exporters' Association to form this alliance." Powerful group.

"(2) The Business Council on National Issues." Good buddies of yours?

Mr Baird: No, no, no, no, wrong.

Mr Marchese: "The BCNI was formed in 1976 by corporate leaders seeking to exert more influence over a state they felt had become too large and interventionist." Sound familiar? I know it does.

"(3) The Canadian Bankers' Association." Big league, big bucks. "The CBA was established more than a century ago to promote the interests of Canada's chartered banks. Typical of most such industry associations, it provides information, research, advocacy and operational support services to its members." God bless them.

"(4) The Canadian Chamber of Commerce.

"Established in 1925, the Canadian Chamber of Commerce is the country's largest business organization with 170,000 members, including 500 local chambers of commerce and boards of trade, over 95 trade and professional associations and several thousand corporations." Big stuff, number four, the big buddies, the corporate élites, hand in hand with the Reform-a-Tories on the other side.

"(5) The C.D. Howe Institute."

Mr Shea: Oh, you hate them.

Mr Marchese: I knew you knew, member from High Park.

"This institute is named after the prominent Canadian industrialist who became 'Minister of Everything' in post-war Ottawa, and was most noted for using American investment to develop Canadian industry."

2230

Mr Baird: Which party?

Mr Marchese: Member for Nepean, I've got to get through this. I haven't got much time. You folks have cut my time. You have cut our time to the extent that we have literally been exterminated.

Interjections.

Mr Marchese: I know you would like to have complete and utter control, with little opposition. That is the way you would like it. I appreciate that. But don't worry, boys, these guys are helping you out.

"6. The Canadian Taxpayers Federation.

"The CTF claims to promote the responsible and efficient use of our tax dollars by acting as a watchdog over government and providing taxpayers with information about 'wasteful spending and high taxation.'

"7. The Fraser Institute."

Mr Baird: Good group.

Mr Marchese: Member for Nepean, you will know them, of course. The member from High Park is becoming hysterical with his protestations over this.

"For many years after the Fraser Institute was established in Vancouver in 1974, it was considered to be a radically right-wing think tank on the fringes of the policy community.

"8. The Investment Dealers Association of Canada.

"As the Canadian investment industry's national trade association, the IDA represents about 120 member firms that employ more than 24,000 people.

"9. The National Citizens' Coalition." Monsieur Ford, tu le connais ? I'm sure you know them.

"The NCC claims to have more than 40,000 supporters but has no fixed membership. It advocates individual freedom and responsibility under limited government and strong national defence but has no democratic internal structure..." and on and on.

Mr Baird: Which group is this?

Mr Marchese: This is the National Citizens' Coalition. They are not protesting that. They like these guys.

"10. The Public Policy Forum.

"This Ottawa-based organization was formed in 1987 to promote private sector participation in public policy development, an efficient public service and mutual understanding among leaders from government, business, labour and the academic community."

Good Lord. Speaker, do you see what I'm saying? Are you aware what we're up against? This is not small, little people we're dealing with; we're dealing with big corporate guys with big bucks and deep pockets.

Mr Baird: What about the other three?

Mr Marchese: I mean with big bucks. The pecunia literally flows out of their pockets so much they have to defend and to protect these guys over here to make sure they get re-elected to protect the corporate interest — at whose expense?

For those who are interested in getting hold of this, this is the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. It's good reading. It's called the Monitor. I encourage it to all, and those who want to become members should because it is likely to be the only information you're going to get that is somewhat objective. I know it blasphemes against them, but you will like it because I think it is revealing.

That's what we're up against. We're up against a very ideological agenda, with big dollars to support it. When this government says, "We are reducing spending," it is in line with these big corporate individuals I have mentioned. This is what they want. When we see a reduction of the government, what they mean is elimination of 17% of its workforce, meaning people are fired, essentially. They are out on the streets.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): Oh, no, no, it's just restructuring.

Mr Marchese: It's called restructuring, realignment, reallocation, re-engineering. It means they're gone.

Mr Lessard: Exterminated.

Mr Marchese: Exterminated, extirpated. If we're lucky, some of these fine individuals we have at the back who are there to defend whatever questions we might have around Bill 175 to help the government, if they're lucky and have particular expertise, they will be hired by the private sector, or if they're lucky, they'll become independent. That is where we're seeing growth in the economy. A lot of these people, to survive, are becoming consultants, are becoming independent to survive; some making a few bucks and some making a few big bucks, but that's what we're seeing.

As I say, a lot of these corporate folks are making big bucks and cutting back on people, and this government is

no different. That's what this government is all about. That is the ethos of this government. It is in line with the corporations. The realignment is in tune with what they want and these are the instruments of that change.

Is cutting taxes, as the member for Nepean said, spending dollars wisely? Speaker, I know you're interested in this.

The Speaker: Yes, I am.

Mr Marchese: Is it spending wisely to give five billion bucks away to people who don't really need it? Just nod. No one will see you. Okay. It is not wise, Speaker. I know it isn't wise and a whole lot of people know it isn't wise. These people have got to borrow five billion bucks to give out to people who don't need it, because 60% of this money is going to 10% of their buddies; 60% of that \$5 billion, give or take a billion, \$4 billion or \$5 billion they've got to borrow, is going away to 10% of their corporate folks.

You remember I read from The Atkinson Letter by one of the economists, Mr Donner, who says: "I would say that, to some degree, all government instruments are blunt instruments. But I believe the tax-cutting solutions being proposed and implemented today are basically ideologically driven. They are not really designed to create jobs, although they are sold that way to the public. The tax cuts are ultimately for the purpose of eroding the role of government and the expectations people have of government."

That's what it's about. It is an economist, a Monsieur Donner. I don't know him. I'm not an economist, and if I say it, people will say: "Ah, but he's a New Democrat. He's a socialist. What does he know?" Right?

Mr Baird: Right. True.

Mr Marchese: Yes. Tories will want to do that. Corporate élites will want to do the same with me, but they can't dismiss someone who is an economist. They can't. They will have to take him seriously, and he says, "The tax cuts are ultimately for the purpose of eroding the role of government and the expectations people have of government." They are "ideologically driven...not really designed to create jobs." I know the Speaker knows that.

Mr Shea: Oh, Rosie.

Mr Marchese: I know the member from High Park knows that in spite of his protestations otherwise. I know that he knows.

The sad thing is that the majority of the public know too because they look at their paycheques and they say: "Where is the money? Send me the money." If the income tax cut has been instituted by 23% already, where is the money? Why haven't they called the member from High Park to say, "High Park member, send me my money"?

Mr Shea: It's in the mail, Rosie.

Mr Marchese: I tell you, it's in the mail. Two years later it's coming. He's going to say, "It's in the mail," for the next two years. It's coming.

Mr Shea: The unions.

Mr Wildman: It's the unions' fault.

Mr Marchese: Sure, he would want to blame the unions for everything. They are a convenient scapegoat. It used to be the Soviet Union. They are not there any more

so they've got to blame somebody. They've got to find scapegoats all of the time.

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: Mr Ford thinks who are the socialists?

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: Well, we will avoid that topic because we have so much to say and talk about.

Speaking of tax cuts, I've got another good article here. Look at this. It's the same CCPA, the Monitor, the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. Here it says: "Tax Breaks Don't Create Jobs."

Hon Rob Sampson (Minister without Portfolio [Privatization]): No.

Mr Marchese: Yes.

Hon Mr Sampson: It really doesn't say that.

Mr Marchese: Minister for privatization, I'm going to send it to you.

Hon Mr Sampson: I am shocked they would say that.

Mr Marchese: I'm going to send you a copy. Listen to this for a moment. Please quiet down and listen to this. Here's what it says:

"Advocates of corporate and payroll tax cuts often claim that they are needed to encourage employers to hire more workers and thus reduce the country's high rate of unemployment.

"A new study, however," — honourable member — "has found that there is no evidence to support a cause-and-effect link between business tax cuts and new hirings.

"The study, conducted by Ben Cherniavsky for the government's Technical Committee on Business Taxation, concludes that 'there appears to be no evidence or linkage between the general level of taxes in an economy and the level of unemployment.'

"Cherniavsky points out that Sweden, with one of the highest tax burdens of all industrialized countries, also has the third-lowest unemployment rate; while Australia, which has one of the lowest taxation rates, still suffers from relatively high unemployment."

2240

I know you want to run away from research. I know you'd rather listen to these other principal agents of the corporate agenda in Canada. I know you want to listen to them versus the studies we are alluding to, done by, obviously, people in the field. I don't know why the minister responsible for privatization shakes his hand thus, but these are studies done for governments. I'm not sure what you mean when you dismissively wave your hand. These are studies. He might do that to me, I appreciate that, but you can't dismiss the studies, surely. At least I would hope you wouldn't do that.

This is what this game is all about, right? We see banks gorge on profits while they have underpaid tellers. They're foaming at the mouth with profits, they're drooling. These guys say, "Hey, isn't this great?" but they're underpaying their tellers.

Here's another one:

"The way the Royal Bank treats its lowliest employees is typical of the Big Six banks in Canada, which collec-

tively racked up over \$6 billion in profits in 1996." They've done better this year.

"The Royal's profits hit a record level of \$1.3 billion.

"Its chairman, John Cleghorn, was rewarded with a salary of \$2.3 million." That's a big take.

"But its full-time tellers are paid an average of only \$21,000 a year — barely above the poverty line set by Statistics Canada for a family of two."

How do you deal with that? How do Tories sleep at night with that kind of stuff?

The big boys, these bankers earning big salaries, who invest my money and yours, much of it going overseas, presumably creating jobs for us, who at the same time as they collect the big bucks fire individuals and at the same time are able to feel good about paying the tellers \$21,000 — we witness in this country a problem of people who are being underpaid, and the salaries are going down. It is clear to me. I'm not sure what some of you are reading at night, but salaries are going down.

The member for Nepean says, echoed by my friend the member for High Park-Swansea, that morale has gone up, and the member for High Park-Swansea says, "Yes, more opportunities for our young, upbeat kind of stuff." My good friend the member for Nepean, unemployment is high, I would remind you. I know you would rather pretend that you don't see, you don't hear, you can't smell and all of that, but unemployment is at 9% nationally, 8.1% or 8.2% now in Ontario.

This is your good province, the one in which you have helped to open up them barriers, open up them windows so the private sector can come in and create good-paying jobs. I don't see them. Young university students, those who have degrees, college students and those who drop out, who have a worse time of it, are saying: "Monsieur Ford, where are the good jobs you promised? Member for Nepean, you said you were creating these jobs with the big cranes, were creating these jobs at \$50,000, \$60,000 and \$70,000 a year. When's mine coming? Send me that job. I want to be able to earn \$70,000 a year."

But they're lucky to even have a part-time job. That's what we're talking about. Part-time jobs are on the rise. Everybody knows that. Optimism is not high. People are working two jobs to make ends meet.

Carol Goar here — I love Carol Goar as a journalist; she writes some good stuff in the Toronto Star — says:

"Moonlighting is a way of life.... Single mothers rush home from their office job and change into a waitress uniform. Computer salesmen give Internet lessons in their spare time. Professors double as management consultants. Factory workers set up repair shops in their garages. Professional women sell cosmetics on the side.

"Some do it because they're workaholics. Some want to improve their living standard. But many take a second job because they can't make ends meet on one paycheque."

So not only do people not have jobs, but those who do are working at two or three jobs because the money they make simply cannot sustain a decent quality of life in this country. We're seeing high poverty among our seniors.

We see 1.5 million people who live in poverty in this country, which I find a national disgrace; we see it here in this province. We see this download of \$560 million, which will create a hell of a problem for a whole lot of communities, property taxpayers and tenants. We see Bill 160, the education bill, that's going to take billions out of our education system. It's all under the guise of these fine Reform-a-Tories who say, "We're going to do more with less." I don't know how you do that, but that's the line from these guys.

We've got a problem. We have a problem when the Premier of this province goes around saying that the liberal arts, such as philosophy, sociology, French — I presume he would include English there as a course; English fits into the liberal arts if French, sociology and philosophy are liberal arts; he means English too as a subject which obviously is not relevant.

Mr Wildman: Geography. He didn't want geography.

Mr Marchese: Geography too.

Mr Lessard: They're frills.

Mr Marchese: I suppose they would be frills. But imagine putting these topics into that frills category, as irrelevant subjects. Come on. That's the Premier. I could understand that of some other member on the other side, but the Premier of this province saying stuff like that? I tell you, I'd be embarrassed when I heard those things if I were a Tory; I was embarrassed as just a member of the opposition and just a nice guy observing things on the outside, listening to that kind of stuff. I would be worried if I were them.

Member for Sault Ste Marie, my good friend, the government says they like to be accountable, right? They talk about that: greater accountability. The member for Nepean spoke about that.

Mr Wildman: That is the reason for the 400 bucks.

Mr Marchese: That's the one. He says government should operate like a business. Didn't you say that, member for Nepean? I heard you. I wrote it down. He says just like business, because they go hand in hand, they collude together, Reform-a-Tories and the big corporations. They do. He says, "We want more accountability."

Well, what about Bill 161?

Mr Wildman: Oh, no, no.

Mr Marchese: Member for Algoma, does Bill 161 give them the accountability these corporate people on the other side want?

Mr Wildman: No receipts.

Mr Marchese: Of course. They said they do not require receipts to get that \$40 a day for two weeks, \$400.

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: My good friend Ernie on the other side says, "Great," but, Ernie, you said you want to operate like a business. Bill 161 doesn't give you that. If you don't have a mechanism for some accountability as people take your money, don't you think that's rather anti-businesslike?

Mr Wildman: It's not their money; it's the taxpayers'.

Mr Marchese: Oh, it's the boards' money — yes, the taxpayers'. But they say there's only one taxpayer. How

could you say you operate like a business and then give \$300 million to people without receipts? What kind of people are you, that you claim to operate like a business and then you give money away, no receipts?

Mr Wildman: It's actually only \$35 million.

Mr Marchese: That much? Up to. Anyway, time is running out, and my good friends from Algoma, Windsor-Riverside and Sault Ste Marie want to speak, but I wanted to point out the context. People need to understand the context. We're in trouble. Unemployment is high, extremely high; 8% is intolerable. That's under these folks, who claim to be able to bring that number down. Poverty is high. They've hit community agencies who deal with seniors and children, people who are single and looking for support. I'm not sure how we can sustain the kind of Canada and province we have built over the last 30 years with the policies of this government, and we urge people to fight back. Call us and talk to us about it. Better still, call these guys and talk to them.

2250

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): I'm going to pick up from where my good friend from Fort York led off. He very effectively set the context for the debate tonight by sharing with us what it is that this government is about, who it is they're driven by, who their inspiration is, who it is who advises them, and then he presented some alternative thought and presentation.

I'm going to focus for a few minutes tonight, because that's all I'm going to take, on the issue at hand, which is Bill 175 and the paying of the civil service by the government of this province and the need to have this bill in order to do that. In that context, I think I would be remiss if I didn't for a moment reflect on the lot of those who have lost their jobs over the last two and a half years due to the downsizing, restructuring, cutbacks of this government.

I would ask, Mr Speaker, for unanimous consent of the House for a moment's silence for all those people who have lost their jobs, those thousands of civil servants in the province who have lost their jobs simply because Mike Harris wanted to give the money they were making, that they were using to put food on the table for their kids, to buy homes and cars, to contribute to the economy, to participate in the communities they belong to — so he could give a tax break to those in this province who really don't need it. If we could have unanimous consent for a moment —

Mr Bill Murdoch (Grey-Owen Sound): Spend more money, as the NDP says. Spend more money.

Mr Martin: If we could have, Bill, a moment of silence in the House tonight in honour of those people who this Christmas will —

The Speaker: Are you seeking unanimous consent?

Mr Martin: I am seeking unanimous consent.

The Speaker: The member for Sault Ste Marie is seeking unanimous consent for a moment of silence. Agreed? No. Continue.

Mr Martin: I appreciate the member for St Catharines actually standing and bowing his head, because he knows

that there are literally thousands of people across this province who will have no paycheque this Christmas, no turkey this Christmas, no presents for the kids this Christmas because across the way we have the Grinch who stole Christmas. Literally, we have the Grinch who stole Christmas for thousands of families across this province, because they have chosen a program of downsizing for no other reason except to pay off those people who supported you in the last election, people who don't need extra money this Christmas.

Mr Murdoch: How about \$10 billion a year? You want to spend \$10 billion you are not bringing in.

The Speaker: Member for Grey-Owen Sound, I appreciate your activism, but I think you'll need to get the floor properly.

Mr Martin: I stand corrected. Obviously, the folks across the way do have a conscience, because what I'm saying here is somehow pricking it and bringing forth a display of concern. It shows itself in strange and weird ways sometimes, but that's what we're having here tonight.

I ask all of you, if you don't want to do it now in the House tonight, to at some point in the next week or two take a moment and think about those men and women who served us all in this province so well over so many years. Who are they? The people who kept our highways clear, the people who worked for the Ministry of Natural Resources in northern Ontario, who protected our forests, the people who delivered the cheques that we all depend on in so many ways, that the province of Ontario delivers for different goods and services.

Those are the folks, the people who run your office, the people who run the Mowat Block, the people who deliver education in this province, the people who work for the province of Ontario, who for years gave of themselves above and beyond the call of duty, took extra courses so they could be the best they could be, took their professions seriously, who now, due to no fault of their own, no shortcoming, no irresponsibility of their own, have no job this Christmas, thousands of them, because you've decided to restructure, to downsize, to terminate them so that you might give a tax break to those people in this province who really don't need it this Christmas.

I just wanted you to know that people out there, though, are catching on. They know what's going on and they're going to send you a message within the next two years that will affect your Christmas somewhere down the road, God willing.

I have a letter here that I want to share with you tonight.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Member for Grey-Owen Sound, you must come to order, and you can't show any disrespect to the Chair.

Mr Martin: Chair, is he being disrespectful to you? I can't believe it. But then again, as I think about the disrespect they've shown to thousands of civil servants across this province who will have no paycheque this

Christmas, it doesn't surprise me, it doesn't surprise me at all.

The people out there aren't as gullible as you think they are. The people out there are paying attention and they know what's going on and they're writing to us. It's interesting: They're writing to you too, but you're not willing to listen, you're not willing to take their voice to this place and put it on the table. You don't have the guts to do that. Well, I'm going to do it for you. Here's a letter I got from a constituent, a letter that was actually sent to Mike Harris. I've got to read it into the record because he won't do it and neither will any of you. It says:

"Dear Sir:

"I have been a Conservative ever since I began working and paying taxes, many years ago.

"One half of my wages went to pay taxes, which supported an excellent health care system. In turn, because of the excellent health care system I was able to work and pay taxes."

Does that make sense to you? It certainly does to me.

"Now that I am in need of medical care, the excellent system is no longer there.

"I do not know how many people have died since your government came to power, but I do think the people of this province have a right to know the number.

"I have been waiting three to four months to have angioplasty performed. The stress of waiting for a call from Sudbury is taking its toll on me. This will either mean more severe medical problems or else I won't be here to pay taxes at all.

"I have lost all faith in the Conservative government. What is the good of paying off the debt if all the people in Ontario are dead? There will be no more debt, but also no more taxes.

"Is this your government's way of looking after the people and making more jobs?

"I would like some answers and some help from the Ontario government so I can get cured, to pay my taxes."

They're not going to get any help. They won't get any answers.

2300

Speaker, I want to end my few moments tonight with something that's a little more light-hearted and share with you a little poetry that was put together by one of my constituents that kind of sums up the way that we on this side of the floor are feeling about the program we're having to swallow for Christmas this year. It goes like this:

For he has the might and he thinks he's right

And he calls it common sense

But we have no doubt what it's all about

And it smacks of pure nonsense

It's a damn tough life, full of toil and strife, we citizens undergo

And we're mad as hell, as the story will tell, how the winds of politics blow

'Cause we're all downsized and were marginalized, and tired of Harris's bull

'Cause they don't give a damn who's out in the cold, as long as their pockets are full

It's Bay Street phoneys and backroom cronies who are calling all the shots

With greed and passion they rule in a fashion which treats us all like stock

They will privatize schools, play us all for fools, sell our children's futures short.

Our task is clear, have no fear, stand up against all their sort.

Harris and Johnson, Harnick and Wilson, Sterling, Witmer, and Eves

Ecker and Snobelen, Leach and Hodgson, each of these deceives.

Tsubouchi, Palladini, did I hear Houdini?

It's not very funny; all they want is power and money
Don't let these guys in their disguise dare pull the wool over our eyes

Make no mistake, there's a lot at stake, it's a foul wind out of North Bay

Common sense should tell us his vision will kill us if we let him have his way

Don't count on him, it's a crying sin if the corporate agenda succeeds

Spread the wealth around, it won't trickle down, don't expect him to heed our needs

Now Snobelen's toast and it's Johnson's post, please save our kids and schools

But Harris will say he's here to stay, God help us find a way

They are so damn thick that it makes us sick, run them out of town on a rail

We'll hit the bricks, get in our licks, let them put us all in jail

For he has the might and he thinks he's right and he calls it common sense

But we have no doubt what it's all about and its facts are pure nonsense.

That was written by a constituent of mine in Sault Ste Marie, and he wrote it while he was on the picket line. He's a teacher who was in support of —

Interjection: I'll bet it was you.

Mr Martin: No. He's an ex-Tory, if the truth were told, and his name is Ken Anstice.

Mr Wildman: I won't speak at length this evening on Bill 175. I'm going to concentrate on two things, that is, downloading and how it has affected the property taxpayers, and also what the government has done and is doing to education.

I must say at the beginning that I'm a little surprised that we're actually dealing with Bill 175 this evening. The member for Northumberland earlier said that his understanding of the way things work around here is that the government does not call legislation if the member for Rainy River isn't present. I don't understand why we're dealing with Bill 175, because the member for Rainy River isn't present, and the member said earlier that they don't call bills unless he's present. I'm not sure why that happens, but I guess he was wrong. I guess what he said about Bill 146, that they didn't call it because the member for Rainy River wasn't present, really doesn't apply and

it's not true, because they have now called Bill 175 and the member isn't here.

As I said, I want to concentrate on two matters, that is, the download and what effects it has had, and also education. I'm going to take as my text two different types of literature that have come into my hands. The first is an editorial from a periodical that I read religiously, and that is the St Catharines Standard. Although it's not one that's delivered to my home, it's one I found. I believe it's owned by Conrad Black, so I always read it because I want to find out what the far right thinks and to help me understand what the government thinks, because they're in line with one another. I thought I'd read this into the record. It's called "Semantics of Downloading Don't Obscure Sorry Truth." This is from the St Catharines Standard of December 16, yesterday, and it goes like this:

"As the Ontario Tories continue their bold strokes toward rewriting the way all sorts of public services are administered and paid for, it has become apparent that the Harris government is painting itself into a corner of mistrust from which it will be unable to emerge before the next election."

I'm just reading portions. I won't read the whole thing:

"The problem is the government's credibility, which this past weekend suffered another major blow when it finally revealed the startling cost of downloading.

"...the Tories have had their share of problems getting from mission statement to real world. But their ballooning haemorrhage of public faith clearly stems from the autocratic contempt with which they go about implementing change.

"...when Queen's Park revealed the funding formula for downloading — just 19 days before municipal governments inherit the full cost of such services as public transit, social housing, public health, ambulances, and sewer and water. In return, the government picks up such considerable expenses as education and health care.

"For months now, senior members of the Harris government, Premier included, have insisted this whole exchange will be 'revenue-neutral' and would not result in the need for property tax increases. Over the past few days, cabinet generals Eves and Leach have continued to preach that, through temporary stopgap bridging grants and still deeper budget cuts by municipalities, there should be no reason for property taxes to go up.

"But as we learned in Friday's bombshell, the government's definition of 'revenue-neutral' seems to accommodate a considerable shortfall...in funding for those programs. Ratepayers will inevitably face not only tax increases, but cuts in some services, and bigger user fees for others."

I say this with trepidation, but it says here:

"This government lied to Ontario. Their 'tax cut' is a tax transfer to the local bill. They may not have known the exact downloading numbers for different cities, but if the Tories were doing any homework on downloading, they obviously knew that the approach could not work without either tax hikes, substantial user fees, crumbling roads,

service cuts, or all of the above. But for months they have opted to pretend otherwise....

"The government has maimed itself again by short-circuiting the democratic process. The Tories are not in the habit" —

Mr Murdoch: Mr Speaker, on a point of order: I just heard the member across the floor talking about the government lying. I was wondering what kind of context he was using that in. When you mention that somebody lies, the word is there, and I'm just wondering what kind of context — maybe he would read that again and we'll see whether that's allowable in here or not.

The Speaker: I didn't hear the phrase he was speaking to, but I can only say to the member for Algoma that if you did suggest the government lied, that would be out of order.

Mr Lessard: No, it wasn't him.

The Speaker: It doesn't matter who suggested it. You can't say something indirectly that you can't say directly, so I would just caution the member for Algoma.

Mr Wildman: You're saying you can't quote?

The Speaker: No. You can quote, but you can't quote unparliamentary language.

Mr Wildman: Even if the word was used extra-parliamentary?

The Speaker: Even if the word was used extra-parliamentary, yes.

Mr Bradley: Mr Speaker, on a point of order: The member for Algoma was simply quoting the St Catharines Standard. I hope none of the Conservative members want to censor the St Catharines Standard.

The Speaker: Member for St Catharines, it has nothing to do with the government members. It's a Speaker's ruling. It's simply a question of this: You can't imply something that you can't deal with directly, so if that line is in there, I ask you to withdraw it.

Mr Wildman: Ironically, because the member for Grey-Owen Sound raised this, he emphasized what the St Catharines Standard actually said, while I tried to scoot over it quickly. But I do withdraw it.

Mr Murdoch: On a point of order, Speaker: The member didn't withdraw that, and I did hear him say that.

The Speaker: He did withdraw it. I heard him.

Mr Wildman: The member for Grey-Owen Sound seems to really want to emphasize what the St Catharines Standard said. It says here:

"But the government has maimed itself again by short-circuiting the democratic process. The Tories are not in the habit of seeking input from affected parties — mayors, doctors, teachers, hospital unions — before ordering a shotgun wedding.

"In being shortsightedly deceitful about the cost of downloading, the Tories were also politically foolish. As they disenfranchise themselves ever further from their core support of traditional fiscal conservatives who deplore tax hikes, it increasingly seems that this government's cynicism is eliminating its chances of being re-elected."

I'm not saying this; this is the St Catharines Standard. It's a very conservative editorial board.

"It is the lack of the integrity in the downloading exercise that reveals a character flaw which we find very troubling, a government's willingness to mislead its constituents in order to achieve its political goals."

Speaker, I withdraw that, but I was just referring to the St Catharines Standard and its view of what downloading will mean for the property taxpayers of Ontario and for the municipalities in Ontario. What it means, of course, is increased property taxes, cuts in services or both. It is not revenue-neutral, as the St Catharines Standard points out. The government knew it wasn't revenue-neutral, yet it continued to say so. Again, this is not a New Democratic periodical, the St Catharines Standard. This is a very, very conservative newspaper. I mean, it's so conservative that it supports my friend from St Catharines. At least I've been told it does at times.

2310

I'd like to read another short thing into the record. This describes clearly what has happened with education under the Conservatives in Ontario, and it has a seasonal flavour. This is written by three people, Anne Brady, Ann McGregor and Mary Brand. I don't know these three people. They mailed this to me. I found it very interesting, very apropos. I thought it really does describe what's happened with education in Ontario, and as I say, it has a seasonal flavour. It's entitled, "How the Grinch Stole Education."

Kids in Ontario

Liked their teachers a lot

But the Grinch who lived way up in North Bay

Did not.

The Grinch hated teachers, no matter what season

Now please don't ask why. No one quite knows the reason.

It could be his head wasn't screwed on just right

It could be, perhaps he just liked to fight.

But I think that the most likely reason of all

May have been that his heart was 10 sizes too small.

But whatever the reason, his heart or his mind,

He knew that he needed to hurry and find

The money to pay for reductions in tax

Even though his economists told him these facts

To do such a thing would not make a difference

And in times such as this did not really make sense.

He had already taken huge amounts from health care

And mothers and children found their cupboards were bare

But he wanted to win in the coming election

And the only thing left was to gut education.

"I'll go after teachers," he snarled with a sneer.

"They need to work harder in that easy career.

Never mind that I quit 'cause it was too tough,

Preferring instead to hit balls in the rough

I couldn't keep teaching without a degree
And those university courses were too hard for me."

While counting his money he got from his pension
He said, "These teachers are causing me tension
I'll take several million and stop all their fund
Replace each old teacher with an unqualified one."

From his perch at Queen's Park he spied teachers on
prep time
And their many vacations he felt were a crime.
He'd already taken many millions out
"There's still more fat there, of that there's no doubt."
Because all the teachers kept doing their best
He made up his mind he'd go for the rest.
The trustees had dealt with his previous downsize
With no other choice but an increase in class size
Forced to continue to raise local tax more
As increasing costs of education they bore.

Then he got an idea
An awful idea
The Grinch got a wonderful
Awful idea.

"All I need is a dupe."
The Grinch looked around
And in Harris's party, one was easily found
He told his new henchman
What he knew must be said,
"If you can't find a crisis, just create one instead."

He directed Snobelen,
Who quit at grade 11,
"Just say children aren't learning compared to their
peers
This way we can increase all parental fears
Test on untaught curriculum
And prove they are dumb
And compare them with students, where only the best
Are chosen to attempt to compete on a test
A bill like 160 we can use to mislead
As we slash education to get what we need."

The Speaker: Member for Algoma, "mislead" is out of order. Plus, I don't like these poems; they're very unparliamentary.

Interjections.

The Speaker: They are. I wouldn't let you say a lot of that stuff in the House just standing. They're discouraging and unparliamentary, and I ask you to be careful. You said "mislead" and that is out of order.

Mr Wildman: I wish to withdraw "mislead," even though it spoils the rhyme.

Then they loaded some bags
And some old empty sacks
To go get some money
To replace all that tax

They went to the first school, saw a class of JK
He patted their heads and he sent them away
He said, "Go on home, from your mommies you'll
learn
Education at your age is not our concern."

Then, a special-ed class where numbers were low
"These classes," he grinned, "are the next things to
go."

Oh, I can't read the next line. I'll skip the first few words here, then it says,

...with a smile most unkind
Looking for any excess fat he could find
Librarians, gym teachers, music and art
He loaded them into sturdy golf cart
Resource, adult learners, and of course ESL
"All of these programs can be chopped as well
To ensure that more kids spend more time with each
teacher
A longer school day and year we'll feature
And although it does not seem to follow this trend,
We'll cut out the OAC year at the end."

He then grabbed pencils and paper and books
Nothing of value did he overlook
He stuffed everything into his golf cart with glee
And turning around a small child he did see
She stared at the Grinch, then she said to him, "Why?
Why are you taking our resources, why?"
But you know that old Grinch was so smart and so slick
He thought up some words and he thought them up
quick
"Why, my sweet little tot," the Grinch Premier [said],
"On television tonight you'll see I'm on your side
If I cleaned out these schools," explains the old
[fellow],
"I know that improvements can only transpire."

Then he did the same thing
To all schools in the province
Telling the public,
"This is all common sense.
By the time they wake up to what this bill can do
Their mouths will hang open a minute or two,
Then teachers and parents will all cry "boo-hoo"
Because they will surely not know what to do
Who cares if they rally with chanting and signs
If they dare leave their classrooms, we'll hit them with
fines
I'll get rid of Snobelen, they know he's finished
Dave Johnson's the one who can keep them in school."

As he turned around his cart and was starting to leave
His ears heard a sound that he couldn't believe
Every teacher in Ontario, the tall and the small
Was talking of walking with no paycheque at all

They know that their students would all understand
That for what you believe in you must take a stand.

And what happened then?
We really can't say
If the Grinch's heart shrunk or grew bigger that day
But one thing for sure has come through loud and clear
You won't hear what you should from our Premier.
And most of Ontario became more aware
That the province's teachers really do care.

I thought that, with apologies to Dr Seuss and Green Eggs and Bacon I would —

The Speaker: Green eggs and bacon?

Mr Lessard: Green Eggs and Ham.

Mr Wildman: Green Eggs and Ham. Sorry.

Some people across the way said, "When would the teachers have time to prepare this?" Of course we know they had time to prepare this when they were walking the streets in protest of what the government was doing with Bill 160. That was something that I'm sure the people who authored this, with the help of Dr Seuss, Anne Brady, Ann McGregor, Mary Brand, even though I don't know them, did not do, that is, take that protest lightly. While they treated the subject somewhat lightheartedly by writing it in relation to Dr Seuss and the Grinch, entitled "The Grinch Who Stole Education," they really do care about students and were driven to a protest they did not want to have to make because the government was threatening the education of their students and they wanted to protect them.

I think it's most unfortunate that we came to this in Ontario. I regret it very much and I wish that the government would rethink their approach and understand that you can't improve education by ending programs, cutting teachers and cutting the resources for our classrooms. The government committed to maintaining classroom expenditures. It should live up to that commitment and not do what this poem says, even though I had to change the words, the Premier has done to the people of this province.

2320

The Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Lessard: I want to thank the member for Grey-Owen Sound — no, not Grey-Owen Sound, his comments were out of order, I guess — but the members for Sault Ste Marie, Fort York and Algoma for their comments with respect to Bill 175.

I thought the member for Algoma really demonstrated the importance of a liberal arts education in Ontario. The Premier doesn't seem to recognize that importance, but it was a poem that was well written and the rhyming was well done.

Unfortunately, we have to deal with the sanitization of language. That's just one of those Orwellian types of things we need to deal with here in the Legislature, where sometimes black is white and white is black and good is bad and more is less. There are a whole lot of words you just can't say at all here any longer. We're all going to have to go back and refresh our liberal arts education so

we can become more creative in making sure that we can convey our ideas here.

It really demonstrates to me why the Premier's favourite books are Mr Silly or Friends of Mr Silly. Mr Silly is his favourite book and that's probably why he feels the way he does about a liberal arts education here in Ontario.

I want to commend the member for Sault Ste Marie for demonstrating the sensitivity he did to the thousands of former public servants who used to work for the province of Ontario and in the municipal sector as well who are going to have a very dismal Christmas as they've lost their jobs because Mike Harris needs the income they were making in order to provide his tax cut for those who are the most well-off here in Ontario.

Mr Bradley: The only part I missed, because the member obviously didn't have enough time, was his evaluation of the time allocation motion which had five bills put together —

The Speaker: You have to comment on the things he spoke to.

Mr Bradley: He wants me to speak on that. He mentioned that he didn't have sufficient time, and when he said he didn't have sufficient time, I want to comment on what he probably wanted to put in in that insufficient time.

The Speaker: You can't comment on what he probably would say; you have to comment on what he did say.

Mr Bradley: I really appreciated the remarks of the member. I know he wanted to mention the time allocation motion which put five bills together and allowed the government to shove through in two hours, with one time allocation motion, a dangerous, precedent-setting time allocation motion, five bills this afternoon. I know he was very concerned about that.

I heard some rude interjections from the other side where members were mentioning the social contract. One member was saying it was the social contract that abrogated all the public sector contracts in Ontario. Of all the people, I ask — and my good friend from Algoma would know this — did they not vote for that? I think they did.

There is a word for the government member for Grey-Owen Sound, the government man who votes with Mike Harris on all votes. He speaks one way in his riding and out in the hallway with the news media, but he comes in here and votes with Mike Harris. People are wondering whether he's as independent as we think. I know he intervened with a point of order when the member for Algoma was speaking, and the member for Algoma didn't have a chance to point out that Bill is now a government man.

The Speaker: No further questions and comments? Then responses.

Mr Marchese: I appreciate the responses, but I just wanted to briefly summarize much of what we all said, and that is that there is a cultural and economic shift that these folks are perpetrating on our society.

The ethos of this government is as follows. They are downloading. Some people call it dumbloading, because it is dumb, because in the end people are hurt and it hurts the economy. In the dumping of the download, taxpayers will get whacked, and tenants too. In the downsizing, 70% of

the people who have been eliminated by these Reform-a-Tories have been whacked as well. They are out of work. Unemployment is 8.1% in Ontario. This is serious for a lot of people who are looking for a decent standard of living and they can't have it under these fine Tories who have promised them the world.

University students who can't find jobs, college students who can't find jobs and those who have no degree having a hard time still — tuition fees. My daughter is in her first year, \$3,800 plus the other expenditures, and it's going up. These guys just permitted, in a statement the other day, another 10% to 20% increase if the universities want, all courtesy of these fine Reform-a-Tories.

Some 1.5 million people who are poor, seniors living in poverty, educators have been whacked, teachers and the teaching profession whacked by these people here. Health care has been stripped to the bone by this government as they do the 17th-century alchemy by saying, "We're going to do more with less." Landlords are pocketing well from

their policies. Developers are doing well. The income tax cut is benefiting many. Subservience will be handsomely rewarded by the corporation.

The Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Bradley: Are we allowed to speak twice?

The Speaker: No, you're not.

Mr Baird has moved second reading of Bill 175. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. I declare the motion carried.

Hon David Turnbull (Minister without Portfolio): Mr Speaker, I move adjournment of the House.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The House stands adjourned until 10 o'clock tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 2327.

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No. 264



N° 264

ISSN 1180-2987

**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

First Session, 36th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Première session, 36^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Thursday 18 December 1997

Jeudi 18 décembre 1997

Speaker
Honourable Chris Stockwell

Président
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 18 December 1997

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 18 décembre 1997

*The House met at 1001.
Prayers.*

ORDERS OF THE DAY

FISH AND WILDLIFE CONSERVATION ACT, 1997

LOI DE 1997 SUR LA PROTECTION DU POISSON ET DE LA FAUNE

Hon Mr Snobelen moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 139, An Act to promote the conservation of fish and wildlife through the revision of the Game and Fish Act / Projet de loi 139, Loi visant à promouvoir la protection du poisson et de la faune en révisant la Loi sur la chasse et la pêche.

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Natural Resources): To the joy of thousands and the encouragement of my colleagues, I'll be sharing my time with the member for Halton North this morning.

Today I'm introducing, for third reading, Bill 139, the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act. This government recognizes that effective management of the province's fish and wildlife resources is essential to the environmental, social and economic wellbeing of Ontario. The Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act demonstrates our commitment to effective management of our natural resources. This act will strengthen Ontario's efforts in conserving and managing the province's valuable fish and wildlife resources. The act will do this by toughening enforcement provisions, protecting and managing a broader range of species, and improving our client service.

We have known for a long time that the current Game and Fish Act is inadequate to meet the needs of Ontario's fish and wildlife resources. Over the last two decades, all three parties have attempted to make major legislative changes to the Game and Fish Act. I'm pleased to say that we have been successful, where other governments have failed, because we built on a strong consensus among stakeholders. We've done the work and the consulting needed to win that support. I'm proud to be able to introduce Bill 139 for third reading and finish the work begun by Premier Mike Harris when he was Minister of Natural Resources. In building support for this legislation, we used all previous attempts to make legislative changes

to the Game and Fish Act as a starting point in developing the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act.

I'd like to acknowledge the previous efforts and ongoing cooperation of all three parties and, in particular, the previous minister, Chris Hodgson. I'd also like to thank the many people right across Ontario who have helped to bring forward a bill that reflects a great deal of consensus and has earned broad support.

We received valuable input during consultation on this legislation from client groups representing a variety of interests, including recreational hunting and fishing, commercial fishing and wildlife industries, animal welfare, agriculture, naturalists and tourist operators. I'm pleased to say that the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act is strongly supported by an impressive range of organizations concerned with Ontario's natural resources. We built support for this bill because we consulted, we listened and we responded to our clients.

Our clients told us that stricter enforcement provisions were needed. The new act will serve as a warning to poachers that Ontario will not tolerate abuses to our fish and wildlife. Offenders will face the toughest penalties in Ontario's history. Those convicted of commercial offences under the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act will be subject to fines of up to \$100,000. We've added jail terms as penalties for offences under the act. With this change, courts will have the power to order offenders to perform community service.

Through our consultation we heard from many client groups and members of the public about the protection and management of black bears. The new act has a number of important changes that provide greater protection for black bears. It would prohibit interfering with a black bear in its den or intentionally destroying its den and prohibits the possession of black bear gall bladders separated from the carcass. By prohibiting the possession of gall bladders in this way, we will have an effective tool against the illegal trade of gall bladders, which has been of significant international concern. The black bear has also been added to the list of species that may not be hunted while the animal is swimming.

Our clients also told us that the new legislation should not just focus on game species such as white-tailed deer, black bear and wild turkey. One of the important changes reflected in the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act is that a broader range of species will be included. The new act provides for the protection and management of specially protected species such as the southern flying squirrel, the blue racer snake, the redback salamander and — one of

my personal favourites — the spicebush swallowtail butterfly. I know that has your attention too, Mr Speaker.

A long-standing complaint with the current Game and Fish Act is that it is outdated and confusing, even for those who use it regularly. The Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act is better organized, making it easier to use and to understand. Following first reading of the act, several groups of individuals suggested amendments to this bill. I'm pleased to say that we've responded to that input. We have incorporated a number of changes to the legislation. I'd like to highlight some of those changes.

We defined the use of the term "aquaculture" in the act to recognize this important and growing industry. We amended section 13 of the act to clarify the prohibition on harassment of people who are legally hunting, fishing and trapping. Subsection 24(2) of the act states, "A person shall not use a boat for the purpose of killing, injuring, capturing, harassing, pursuing or chasing wildlife." This provision gives enforcement staff a mechanism to address clearly unethical situations. For example, it would prevent someone from using a watercraft to chase a nesting bird away from a nest. However, some members felt this subsection might infringe on the ability to reach an appropriate site from which to hunt legally. We listened to the concerns and, to clarify the situation, we've included an amendment that, through regulation, will provide for exemptions to the general prohibition.

Currently, a person must obtain a dog licence when using a dog to hunt white-tailed deer, moose and elk. Our clients told us that there should be a similar requirement for persons using a dog to hunt black bear. We've amended the act to ensure this is a consistent approach with respect to big game hunting.

Section 36 of the act prohibits a person from abandoning or allowing the spoilage of fish and wildlife. We've made an amendment to the bill to allow for an exemption on the prohibition because we recognize there are situations where this is necessary to prevent or control the spread of disease. We amended section 88 to clarify that a conservation officer may also inspect associated ammunition when inspecting a firearm for the purposes of the act or the regulations.

I've touched on just a few of the many ways in which the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act will improve our ability to sustain and manage our province's fish and wildlife resources. I believe we've listened to our clients through the long journey of this bill, including the important amendments we have recently made. The passage of this bill will fulfil a promise this government made to the people of Ontario, all of whom value our natural resources to bring forward tough legislation for fish and wildlife protection in this province.

1010

Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton North): I'm very pleased — a great deal of pleasure — to rise in the House today and speak in support of Bill 139, the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act. This act has been a long time coming. As the minister mentioned, it, or an act very similar to it, was first introduced in 1985 by the then Minister of

Natural Resources, the Honourable Michael Harris. It was again introduced by the Peterson government, by Vince Kerrio, in this House, following the Peterson victory. It was again introduced by Mr Bud Wildman, who was then Minister of Natural Resources under the Rae administration. Finally, it was reintroduced again by the Honourable Chris Hodgson as Minister of Natural Resources last year and has reached this point in the Legislature under the guidance of the Honourable John Snobelen, now Minister of Natural Resources.

It has taken a lot of people a lot of time to get this bill to the point it is at today. I would be remiss if I didn't thank the member for Algoma-Manitoulin for his support of this bill through second reading and the committee hearings, along with the member for Sudbury East, who with their parties supported this legislation and, with their amendments and comments, have made this a better piece of legislation throughout that process.

The Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act sets the stage for a very effective management of our fish and wildlife resources into the next century.

As the Honourable Minister of Natural Resources has mentioned, the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act was developed through extensive consultations with a large number of client groups. A number of those client groups, including the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, the Animal Alliance of Canada, the World Wildlife Fund, the Ontario Hawking Club and the Northern Ontario Tourist Outfitters Association, made presentations on Bill 139 to the standing committee on general government last week. The input from these client groups and from the committee members representing all three parties was invaluable in making the amendments the minister described earlier. I would like to thank them, the client groups and the committee members for their efforts and assistance.

All too often we refer to the bureaucrats in the government in — what should I say? — less than glowing terms, but let me say that the civil servants in the Ministry of Natural Resources helped us put together this act and do much of the informal consultation prior to getting the bill to this point in time. I make note of those individuals and thank them for their commitment to this bill.

There is extremely strong support among our client groups for this bill and I am pleased that we have been able to make such substantial progress on this very important issue.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Questions or comments?

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): It is nice to see a piece of legislation go through this House supported by all parties, to be sure, but we cannot forget the fact that it's nice to pass these laws but if you don't have the conservation officers to enforce them, you really haven't done anything at all. When we look at the fact that 20% of all the conservation officers we had within the Ministry of Natural Resources have been let go or fired or eliminated, there are simply too few people left to make the necessary inspections, to make sure that the laws of

this province as they relate to natural resources are being adhered to.

The other interesting fact of course, which bears right on that same issue as well, is when you look at the amount of money we're spending in natural resources. Just two years ago we spent over \$519 million to make sure that the natural resources of this province were properly managed and looked after by the province. That now is down to \$369 million, a drop of \$150 million, which in effect means that the ability of this ministry to do its work has been reduced by some 33%.

So I say to the minister, yes, we support this law, but at the same time you want to have enough resources within your government department to make sure the inspections that will be required under the new act and regulations will be properly done. Currently that's simply not the case. There are too few people we've got as conservation officers and it is high time we change that perspective or we change the way we're doing that right now.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): I guess my question to the minister would be this: On the one hand you say you're strengthening the act to make sure that we protect the wildlife and we protect fish habitat. I guess it's two questions. The first one is, I want to know how the ministry is going to do that given that there are half the employees in the Ministry of Natural Resources there were, let's say, two years ago. I think the minister and most members of this House would understand and agree that if you're going to put a law in place, it takes a certain number of people to go out there and look and inspect what's happening out in the bush, check out what's happening and at the same time enforce the actual law itself. So my first question to the minister is, how do you plan to enforce this law if you don't have the staff at the Ministry of Natural Resources to go out and do the type of site inspections that need to be done?

The second question I would have is this: When the minister, in June 1997, got up with great fanfare and introduced his bill he said, "We're going to get tough. We're going to protect fish wildlife. This is what this is all about. We're going to do a really good job," but then there was an internal memo dated August 14, 1997, from the deputy minister which said, "The Ministry of Natural Resources will no longer review proposals to determine if proposed work will destroy fish habitat."

Isn't that interesting? On the one hand, the government says they're going to be strengthening the legislation in order to protect fish habitat and on the other hand their own internal memo is saying, "We're not going to go and inspect anything that happens with lumber companies or prospectors or mining companies that go into the bush, that need to cross creeks in order to do work." Of course we have to allow them to cross a creek to do the work, but there are certain methods of doing that that protect fish wildlife, and the Ministry of Natural Resources is saying, "We're not going to send anybody into the bush in order to inspect what happens and how this is done." So my question is, how are you going to protect fish wildlife

without the ministry staff needed to be able to do that and without an inspection of those permits?

Mr Frank Klees (York-Mackenzie): I'm pleased to rise and add my commendation to the minister and the parliamentary assistant for having brought this bill forward, and also to appreciate the support of the members of the opposition for this bill. I had the privilege of sitting on the committee that heard representations and I can say that various groups from across the province came forward to commend this government on bringing this bill, which had been contemplated by many governments to this point, forward to the point we're at now for third reading.

Also, as the member of provincial Parliament for the riding of York-Mackenzie, I received many submissions from constituents. One of those letters came to me from Mr Neil Traverse of Newmarket. I'd like to just read what was contained in his letter and also in many other letters we received from people across the province. He urges us, regarding Bill 139 and the fish and wildlife of Ontario, saying that they need the support of this government through this bill. The indication in this letter is that this bill is particularly important in the sections dealing with increases in fines for poaching, closing the loopholes in the law for animals poached from other jurisdictions, and the special purpose account that uses the money from angling and hunting licences for conservation. He goes on to say that all of these are needed to improve the management of Ontario's wildlife.

Many other organizations, ranging from the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters to the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, the Animal Alliance of Canada, the World Wildlife Fund and many other organizations from across this province and in fact across this country, have come forward to commend this government for bringing forward this very important bill.

The Acting Speaker: Further questions or comments? If not, the minister for two minutes.

Hon Mr Snobelen: I want to thank the member for York-Mackenzie for his comments this morning and make note of the fact that the member was the parliamentary assistant during the time this bill was introduced and certainly did much of the consultation work with groups across the province. He is to be commended for that work.

I also take note of the comments by members of the opposition and the third party. Of course I have listened intently to those comments and will take those views into account when we manage this act after it has been passed and received royal assent.

I also note today that there is a certain kind of warmth and kindness in the remarks that hasn't necessarily been present when I have introduced other bills in this House. I can only assume that's because of the festive season and also because of the commitment to the preservation of fish and wildlife in Ontario.

1020

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William): I'm pleased to rise and participate in third reading debate on the Game and

Fish Act. Having spoken to it already on second reading, I want to acknowledge that I am indeed a former Minister of Natural Resources, as I did acknowledge when I spoke on second reading of the bill, I say to the parliamentary assistant. Therefore, yes, I am one of the people who have looked at versions of the Game and Fish Act in the past, part of one of those previous governments that has wanted to see amendments brought forward to the Game and Fish Act but has not seen it carried forward to the stage we're at today, which is third reading on an amended Game and Fish Act. On second reading I expressed a sentiment that I think is shared by members of the House, that we're glad to see that at least this section of the amendments to the Game and Fish Act is going to come forward.

I do, however, think it's equally important to acknowledge that one of the reasons this particular version of the Game and Fish Act and its amendments is coming forward for third reading is that the controversial issues which had delayed this act coming forward for previous governments, which indeed have been engaged in discussions about this for what seems like many years — the act and the amendments had been proposed well before I became minister and that was some eight years ago if my calculations are correct, so this debate has been going on for some time. The reason it is coming forward today for third reading is that the most controversial issues that have stalled the finalization of the amendments to this act for past governments, over a number of years, have simply not been dealt with by the government. There are two in particular and I know they have received some extensive comment at the second reading debate, but I think they deserve to be mentioned again as this goes to third reading, because we don't want these controversial issues to disappear and never be dealt with again.

One of those is the whole issue of the domestic farming of wildlife species. This has caused considerable concern for people in the hunting fraternity, as well as for people in the Ministry of Natural Resources and people who are concerned about what effect wildlife species being imported for domestic farming purposes — because you cannot farm native wildlife species — may have on our ability to provide for conservation of our own native wildlife species.

This is an ongoing question that causes ongoing concerns. It's not dealt with in the amendments to the Game and Fish Act that are before us today, and there is not a chance it is going to get dealt with in the half day of hearings that were to have been devoted to this particular act. So it's an outstanding issue that I believe the government of the day needs to continue to grapple with.

A second controversial issue that is not dealt with, that again is of ongoing concern, is the whole question of fish farming. I know that people who are involved in aquaculture have considerable concerns about certain parts of the Game and Fish Act. I think their concerns need to be heard, they need to be addressed, and if it means the current government or a future government has to come to grips with further amendments to the Game and Fish Act, so be it. I don't think these long-standing concerns can

simply be ignored now that there is to be some proceeding with a process of amending the Game and Fish Act.

Those are two of the controversial issues that I think have been left out. If I address what is in the act, obviously we are all going to be supportive of measures which allow greater conservation of game and fish. As a northerner, I am obviously going to rise in support of measures which will enhance conservation. I spoke on second reading about the importance of natural resources to the economy of northern Ontario, and I can't emphasize that enough. This may not seem to be — apart from the parliamentary assistant and the Minister of Natural Resources — one of the issues of greatest political importance, unless you happen to come from northern Ontario where the management of natural resources is indeed a matter of great importance, because it's crucial to our economy.

It's for that reason that we will be supportive of measures which enhance conservation, but we cannot speak to that and lend our support to this without putting it into the context of what this government has done to make it virtually impossible to enforce the very conservation measures it is putting forward, with considerable pride, in this bill.

You cannot enforce effective conservation, of the amended Game and Fish Act or any of the regulations relating to the conservation of our natural resources, if you do not have enough physical and financial resources within the Ministry of Natural Resources to provide for the enforcement. You cannot provide enforcement if your conservation officers are spending a large part of their time behind the desk doing administrative work, as is indeed the case. The threatened cutback to conservation officers has not proceeded, but the lack of time our conservation officers have to actually be out in the bush, doing the monitoring and doing the enforcement of the Game and Fish Act, has been considerably reduced.

Beyond that, there is an inability now on the part of the Ministry of Natural Resources to do the kind of monitoring, the kind of auditing which is necessary if you're going to be involved in real conservation of natural resources. As a former minister, I know the demands of audit. I know that at the point of time at which I was involved as Minister of Natural Resources there was an almost desperate need to have an audit of our timber resources. It is a time-consuming, costly process and a process which has to be carried on on an ongoing basis if you're going to effectively manage our timber resources, clearly one of our key economic natural resources.

There is also an essential need to provide for audit of our wildlife species, so as we talk about Game and Fish Act amendments, we talk about enforcement that will enhance the preservation of wildlife species. You can't do that unless you have some audit of how healthy the wildlife species are. The first call I got from a concerned constituent when I became Minister of Natural Resources — I remember it well, on a Sunday afternoon — was from somebody who believed that the ministry's assessment of its wildlife species was totally inaccurate and that

decisions being made to regulate hunting were being made on the basis of inaccurate data.

I don't know whether that particular constituent's claim was right or wrong and whether the ministry's data were accurate or not accurate, but my point is it is again a costly, time-consuming process, a labour-intensive process, in order to be able to carry out an effective audit of the health of our wildlife species.

The same thing is true when it comes to fisheries conservation, whether we're talking about management of the fisheries for recreational purposes or management of the fisheries for commercial purposes. You cannot provide for a regulatory framework that allows effective conservation as a resource, so that it can be managed for both recreational and commercial use, unless you know how healthy the fish stocks are.

I have talked to commercial fishermen on Lake Erie who said they don't think the Ministry of Natural Resources is able to do an effective audit of the health of our fisheries resource, so how can they decide what the fisheries quotas should be, and yet that determination of the fisheries quota is absolutely crucial to the economic health of our commercial fisheries and, in turn, has a direct bearing on what the allocation is for recreational fishing, which has an important economic impact on communities right across the province. The fishermen on Lake Erie said to me, "Unless you have natural resources people who can actually go out on the boat, so that they understand what is actually happening when you're out there fishing, then you cannot have a good sense of the health of our fisheries resource."

What's the point of my raising all of these issues around audit, whether it's of timber or wildlife or fisheries? It's because in each of these areas you've got to have the knowledge to provide the regulations that allow for conservation, and in each of the areas it is both costly and labour-intensive, and so when we talk about the Game and Fish Act and we talk about new conservation measures and the importance of enforcing that, we have to come back to the fact that this government, the Mike Harris government that is bringing this bill forward, has cut back the budget for the Ministry of Natural Resources by some 22%.

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When the parliamentary assistant thanks the staff of the Ministry of Natural Resources — and as a former minister I want to second the thanks that are given to the staff of the Ministry of Natural Resources — let's recognize the fact that he is thanking some 2,000 fewer people than were in the Ministry of Natural Resources, on their staff, when the Harris government came into office. I do think it is — I'm not sure if the word "hypocrisy" is parliamentary language, Mr Speaker, and I know that you are very intent on watching parliamentary language. Let me say it is one thing to speak on the one hand about the importance of conservation, new conservation measures and enforcement of these conservation measures, and on the other hand to have cut 22% of the budget of the ministry that is responsible for monitoring and for enforce-

ment, and to have 2,000 fewer people out in the field who can actually carry on that monitoring and that enforcement.

I don't think those two realities fit together. That is why, although I can be supportive of new conservation measures, I am not optimistic that they can actually be made effective in the field.

I hope the minister, as he makes his comments with some pride about bringing this bill forward for third reading, if he is sincere in that pride and in his commitment to conservation and to the management of our natural resources, will persuade his cabinet colleagues and the Premier of Ontario and the Minister of Finance that natural resources are indeed important economically to this province, important to the future of this province, and deserve better than having the budget of the ministry that provides for the management of those natural resources slashed and its personnel cut in half.

Because we're talking about the Game and Fish Act, I won't get into the actual economic impact on northern Ontario communities of losing those 2,000 jobs, because of course the predominant number of staff cuts affected northern Ontario communities and that had a significant economic impact on our communities.

Let me just again stress the fact that in northern Ontario particularly, the management of our natural resources is crucial for our economy and for our future. It cannot be done effectively if the Ministry of Natural Resources is somehow reduced to being a junior ministry, and its minister is brought out only to present amendments to the Game and Fish Act — an important part of the management of our natural resources, and I don't want to underplay it, but only one part of our management of natural resources, and even that part cannot be carried out effectively unless there are adequate personnel and adequate resources given to the Ministry of Natural Resources.

If this sounds like a plea to recognize the importance of what this bill supposedly addresses, it is, because I think it is important and has to be acknowledged as such in every aspect of the ministry's and the government's operations.

With that in my mind, I want to turn to a couple of the issues that are important to the management of our natural resources, that are relevant to this act but are not addressed in the amendments before us, and would not appropriately — let me acknowledge that — be addressed in this specific act. But I think it's important we recognize that conservation of game and fisheries cannot proceed in the absence of effective conservation of other areas of our natural resources. I am concerned, therefore, that the whole issue of timber management is not being dealt with adequately by this government in spite of the fact that there was considerable time, a tremendous effort and a great deal of money devoted to something called the class environmental assessment of timber management.

I'm fairly familiar with the class environmental assessment on timber management because I was the minister at the time that began. There was a lot of controversy about whether that should have taken as long or cost as

much as it did. There was a lot of controversy, even then, about whether or not a focus on timber management was adequate to address all of the related issues involved in forestry management, which includes the management of our game and our fisheries.

Nevertheless, it was a costly, time-consuming effort focusing again on one part of resource management, forest management, but broadening in the course of that to touch on other issues related to forest management, to recognize the interrelatedness of the whole management of forestry, timber, game, wildlife resources and fisheries resources, because you can't talk about one separately from another.

That was a basis on which this government could have proceeded to take some very significant actions in the management, not only of our timber resources, of our game and fish resources, but of our whole forest management. What did they do instead? They cut back on the funding that was to have been devoted to implementing the recommendations of the class environmental assessment on timber management. They cut \$19 million out of the budget that was devoted to that.

What does that say about this government's actual commitment to the management, not only of timber but of forestry? If you're seriously concerned about the Game and Fish Act and the conservation measures that are about to be adopted, why would you not be equally concerned as a government about implementing the recommendations of the environmental assessment on timber management, those recommendations having a very direct bearing on the management of our wildlife and our fisheries resources?

If you want to talk about wildlife, talk about caribou, talk about moose, talk about the kind of interrelationship between the management of timber and the way in which we harvest our forest for timber purposes and what that does in terms of the habitat for caribou or for moose. They're interrelated issues. Unless as a government you are prepared to devote resources — financial and personnel — to the whole area of forestry management, then you're not going to effectively manage the wildlife resource or the fisheries resource, let alone the timber resource. Cutting \$19 million from implementing those recommendations was really not an adequate response from a government that purports to be concerned about these issues.

The government of course is involved in an extensive exercise looking at Lands for Life. This could potentially be a very positive exercise. It's an important one, and I want to recognize the importance of that exercise. It's an exercise that is extremely important to northern Ontario and extremely important to the management of our natural resources.

The outcome of the Lands for Life process could result in essentially a dividing up of a huge land mass in Ontario — almost 90% of the land mass of northern Ontario. If anybody has actually seen a map of Ontario, you'll realize what a huge part of the total land mass of Ontario we're talking about here, when we're talking about 90% of the land mass of northern Ontario being discussed at a table

with a group of individuals who will make recommendations to government. Government alone will have the power to decide in what way northern Ontario is to be divided up. The decisions that are made there are going to have an enormous effect, not only on the management of our resources but on the economy of northern Ontario and of the province itself.

Yet the concern all of us have, even as we endorse the importance of the Lands for Life process, is that there will not be enough time devoted to this process, that the report will be called for before there has been a full consideration of the huge sweep of issues that are being debated in the Lands for Life process, and that once again, there will not be due consultation on the recommendations the government is considering.

Let me make another plea, while there is still time, to a government that has curtailed the consultation process on virtually everything they've done for the last two years, a government that would prefer to see recommendations which bring about sweeping changes to health care, to education, to the way in which our municipalities are managed, to see those changes brought forward with no consultation at all.

We have a government that has forced opposition members to do sit-ins in the House and bring in thousands of amendments to bills just to have time for some public consultation on issues that bring about enormous changes in the way in which we are governed. I say to that government that has so little regard for the consultation process, please, when you get the Lands for Life recommendations, and when you're about to take decisions that will have a bearing on northern Ontario's economy with implications for the future that, if you're not a northerner, are almost imaginable, please give us time to look at those recommendations, to have some broad public consultation on the recommendations so that northerners get a chance to say how northern Ontario should be managed and how our resources should be managed.

Mr Speaker, I am conscious that my colleague is anxious to speak before he has to leave for another event, so there are just two other areas I want to touch on that for me are so fundamentally important to resource management that, although I've spoken briefly to them on second reading of the bill, I feel called upon to mention again today.

One is the issue of parks management. Obviously parks management is part of the Lands for Life management, it's part of timber management, it's part of forest management, and it's something where I find the government's policy confusing to say the least. When I spoke on second reading, I thought it was appropriate to mention that the government had received an F about a year and a half ago from the World Wildlife Fund for its failure to acknowledge and protect ecologically significant areas in Ontario.

I acknowledged, and I think the parliamentary assistant said in his comments, that the government had moved up I think to a C in a subsequent rating because they had set

aside some additional to preserve ecologically significant areas.

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I acknowledge that they have made some steps in the direction of setting aside ecologically significant lands, but I want to make it very clear that neither the World Wildlife Fund nor anybody who is genuinely concerned about the management of our parks is going to be supportive of a government that, on the one hand — I can't use the word "hypocrisy," so I won't — sets aside lands for ecologically significant reasons, as if they were protecting those lands as parks, and, on the other hand, cuts back on parks management and puts in place a policy that says any park in Ontario must be able to pay for itself or it will be closed or sold off.

I can't reconcile those two parts of a policy related to parks: a government that wants to impress the World Wildlife Fund that it warrants a C+ instead of an F because it's setting aside lands for parks management with a government that says that if any park in Ontario can't pay for itself, it is going to be closed down or privatized. We've already seen the shutting down of a number of our parks. I will tell you that you cannot run a natural environment park or a wilderness park like Quetico Provincial Park in my part of the province on a pay-as-you-go basis. You can't run it like a tourist-oriented KOA, and yet that's what the policy of this government is, to run our parks, even our wilderness parks, as if they were commercially operated KOAs.

I want to know, if this government is serious about conservation, if it values getting from an F to a C+ in the World Wildlife Fund rating for what it's prepared to do on conservation of parks, is it prepared to change the policy put in place by the previous Minister of Natural Resources? I would love to hear the minister or the parliamentary assistant stand up today and tell me, "That policy that was articulated by Mr Hodgson" — that is recorded in Hansard, so if you want to check whether he said it or not, it's there — "that says that parks have to pay as they go, that they have to be able to prove that they are revenue-neutral," if we can still use that word in Ontario, "that they're not costing the government anything to run, that that policy that was articulated by Mr Hodgson has been withdrawn, repudiated, repealed by the government today." If I could hear that kind of statement from this government, I could then believe that we had a government that was seriously prepared to revisit its approach to conservation and to management of our natural resources. If they are not prepared to repeal that policy, then I am very afraid that any recognition of ecologically significant areas, setting them aside as parkland, means virtually nothing because there is no commitment to real management of those as natural resources in the public interest.

Lastly, I want to touch on another issue that is important to me, and that's the issue of fire management, because all of what we're talking about today becomes meaningless if our forests burn down around us. It is meaningless if we talk about habitat for wildlife, and you

can't talk about conservation of wildlife, unless you're prepared to talk about habitat and you're not prepared to talk about the role that fire management plays in ensuring that we have a healthy habitat for wildlife. You can't talk about fisheries management or the tourism benefit of management of our fisheries if you're not prepared to look at fire protection, fire management of the very forest resource which is the basis for the majority of our fisheries and our recreational fishery. You certainly can't talk about the management of natural resources if you're not prepared to talk about the issue of fire management in relationship to natural resources.

This is one of the areas where the government's actions — I don't think I can call it policy because I don't think there is any policy for fire management on the part of this government right now — speak so loudly that they either don't understand the issue of fire management or they don't want to understand it, or they want to play games with the budget for fire management so that they can look as though they're making some cutbacks right across the board, because this is one of the areas in which this government saw fit to cut back its budget, to trim the budget for fire management.

I'm a former Minister of Natural Resources and I know how easy it is to take a budget and say, "You're going to make some cutbacks, so let's take some money out of the fire budget," because you know, after all, if the fires start and the forests start to burn, you're going to be able to come back to your government and you're going to get some more money to ensure that you've got the fire protection. It can be a way of playing some games with the exercise of having to make cutbacks.

I certainly don't want to suggest that there should be any more cutbacks in other areas of the Ministry of Natural Resources so that the fire budget is protected — far from it. There should not be the cutbacks in the Ministry of Natural Resources, but there cannot be cutbacks in the area of fire management because what happened was that this government cut back the budget for fire management, it closed firefighting bases, it created situations not just in northern Ontario but in southern Ontario where if a fire begins in our forest, it is virtually impossible to get to that fire before it becomes a significant fire much more difficult to stop and much more likely to destroy hectares of our forests as well as threaten numbers of our communities.

That's what happened when this government cut back on the budget for forest firefighting. What also happened was that they laid off personnel who were trained to fight fires. Then the fires started and they started becoming huge fires, almost unfightable fires, and there were no trained personnel to fight them. We had people coming into our constituency offices, because I'm in northern Ontario, saying: "I'm a trained firefighter. The Ministry of Natural Resources cannot re-employ me to go and fight the fires that are burning today because it would violate my severance package." So they had to go out and set up a training program to train people to fight fires. It took a

while to get the training program set up and in the meantime the fires were burning.

This government must put in place a coherent policy for forest management that includes firefighting and it must provide adequate resources and the trained personnel to fight the fires when they occur.

Again I want to stress the urgency of this today. I know it's December and I know there's no snow on the streets of Toronto and I think you should know there's very little snow on the streets of Thunder Bay and there's a dry spell in the Prairies. If you think this isn't relevant — I see the member for Etobicoke, I'm not sure which Etobicoke, shaking his head — come to northern Ontario and I'll tell you that in December, when you don't get the average snowfall you expect to get, you start worrying about what the fires are going to be like in April. That's a reality for northern Ontario, and because this government doesn't understand that, they don't understand the northern realities, they're not talking about a budget for firefighting in December when they see that there is not enough moisture now to prevent those fires becoming acute this spring.

As a northerner I want to say, reverse the lack of policy you've had in the past, reverse the cutbacks in firefighting and make sure that come April, after what appears to be a dry winter coming, we have the resources that we need to fight fires in northern Ontario. Without that, all this talk about the game and fish protection act become meaningless, because we will not be able to protect the natural resources of habitat for our fisheries or our wild-life or protect the timber resources that are so essential to our economy. Nor will we be able to protect the parks that, on the one hand, the government says it wants to create.

The management of fire within our provincial parks is a whole other issue and I'm not going to get into that today, but it's an important issue. Believe it or not, it's a complex issue because fighting fires in our provincial parks hasn't downsized. It can lead to what we call the Yellowstone park factor where our forests become ancient and the undergrowth in the forest becomes like a tinder box ready to explode and create a fire of such intensity that even the most ancient trees, the trees that are 200 and 300 years old, trees that have survived lesser fires, less intense fires, can be destroyed. Our ancient forests can be wiped out because of the intensity of a fire that can start in our forestry preserves, in our park preserves. That's what happened in Yellowstone National Park, and I believe it's a tragedy. As a northerner, I have to tell you, it's a tragedy if we lose those resources.

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So I plead with this government again, plea number three, if I'm counting, to look at the way in which it has handled fire management and to put in place a coherent policy and to have some debate and discussion with people in the field about how to fight fires effectively. We know a lot about it. One of the areas of expertise, or it used to be one of the areas of expertise, of the Ministry of Natural Resources was how to fight fires. We've lost a lot of that

expertise with the cutbacks, but there are some areas in which we need to have a lot more discussion to understand how we manage our parks and our old forests, our ancient forests, in times of fire.

I hope this government will look at this whole issue and take it seriously, because the whole question of management of our natural resources is so critical for the future of northern Ontario, and indeed of the province, and this Game and Fish Act is one important part, but one part only, of the management of those resources.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Comments and questions?

Mr Bisson: I want to comment on the speech from the former Minister of Natural Resources from the year, I believe, 1987. She raises a point that is really important, and that is the whole issue of the ministry having the capability of being able to go out and do the work that has to be done to check fish habitat.

I can tell you as a northerner, as she well understands, in the north one of the primary activities of industry is the forestry industry. By the very design of the work they do, they have to cross creeks and rivers to get to the other side, to get to patches of timber to cut down for economic activity. We all know that the companies, as best as they can, try to do a good job, but the ministry has always been there, with good regulation and also with ministry staff, to go in and to check what's going on when they do these crossings.

Our fear, because we've seen it in the past, is that if the ministry is not there doing the work that has to be done to make sure it's being done right, sometimes, especially in the case of the smaller contractors, they'll start crossing these creeks in a way that will disturb fish habitat. Somebody here in southern Ontario may say, "That's not a big deal; it's just a couple of fish," but for communities that's sometimes a way of life. If you get into some of these smaller communities, sport fishing is a big part of what they do as economic activity. For the recreation of people who live in northern Ontario, as a fisherman I can tell you there's nothing more pleasurable than getting out on the weekend to do a little bit of fishing, and you want to know there will be fish when you get there.

The government is strengthening the rules by which some of this has to be done, and we think that's a step in the right direction, but our fear is that if the ministry doesn't have the capacity to put people in the field to inspect what is going on, you can have all the regulations you want, at the end of the day if nobody knows you're doing something wrong, how the heck are you going to enforce this thing? I think the member makes a good point and it's something the government should concentrate on.

Mr Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): I rise to speak to the member for Fort William's comments. First of all, I'd like to say that we know very well that fishing and hunting are very active activities in the province and represent a direct expenditure of about \$2.92 billion, but that doesn't include the manufacturers or external sales that go outside the province. I think when those are factored in, we're going to see figures up around the \$4 billion mark.

In the region of Durham, the rough estimates the region has produced show that fishing alone represents a \$75-million industry. On Pelee Island, for example, in a five-day pheasant hunt they generate in excess of \$1 million worth of revenue.

More directly to the comments from the member for Fort William, and understanding the northern concerns, when we talk about the enforcement provisions, what took place under the previous governments is that we had enforcement officers but they had gas and mileage limitations. Effectively, they could drive to work in their vehicle and then they had to stay in the office; they weren't allowed out in the streets to do anything.

We talk about game audits and the problems there. It was the previous governments that reduced the numbers of game audits, that didn't do them. That's why when this government came in one of the first things we did was the moose audit. That's why we saw significant changes in the moose-tag allocation, because we went out there and saw what was out there and knew what needed to be done in order to have that sustainable harvest.

Also, when we talk about trained individuals participating in knowing what's going on in MNR-related issues, the previous governments started to hire COs who didn't even have hunting licences or experience in the hunting field. Those are just a couple of things.

As well, the member for Fort William may or may not remember, but I was part of the Ontario Wildlife Working Group she established. She talked about caribou management. At that time, members of the ministry told me that it was that minister, the member for Fort William, who had shelved the caribou management program in Ontario.

Mr Bernard Grandmaître (Ottawa East): The last member of the government spoke on how important the fish habitat and the forestry business are to the government and to the province. When you look at the budget cuts, last year from \$426 million to \$369 million, I'm just wondering how important this industry is to the government.

As pointed out by the member for Fort William, if we really mean business, if we're serious about our forests and fish habitat, we need to have the people in place to supervise these economic resources of the province. I think it's unfair on the government's part to stand today in the House and say, "We're doing something about our fish habitat or the forestry industry in Ontario." Also, as pointed out by the member for Fort William, if we really mean business, especially in firefighting, regarding our natural resources, we need the expertise and personnel to fight these forest fires. In reducing the budget by close to \$150 million, I don't think the government is serious about improving the forestry industry and our fish habitat. For the last six or seven years we've been at this kind of legislation and finally there is something in place.

Mr Wayne Lessard (Windsor-Riverside): The member for Fort William began her remarks by talking about some of the things that weren't in Bill 139 and mentioned specifically the issue of farming of non-indigenous game animals. That's something that I think is a growing

industry, especially in southern Ontario. During the past summer, I had the opportunity of touring some farms in the Huron county area, and one of those farms had emu, llamas and wallabies. It really seemed clear that species like emus were well bred and produced in southern Ontario climates. But we need to be concerned, and I'd like to ask the minister what sort of resources are going to be allocated to ensure that domestic farm animals are going to be protected from outbreaks of disease and things like that from non-indigenous game animals being farmed in Ontario.

The member for Fort William also mentioned one of the most important issues with respect to this bill, and that is the mechanisms that are there for enforcement. It's all well and good to increase the fines that may be payable if somebody is convicted, but for you to get that conviction, you need to have people out in the field to enforce the act. We know that in 1996-97 this ministry cut its annual budget by \$90 million and reduced its staff by over 2,100 people — that was half of the ministry — so how are they ever going to enforce the provisions of this act?

I'd like to end, with respect to her comments, by talking about protection of natural resource areas and specifically parks, because in my riding we have a park in the Detroit River called Peche Island, and the ministry is trying to sell that back to our community. It's a public resource that we're being expected to pay for twice, and that's not right.

1100

The Acting Speaker: The member for Fort William has two minutes to respond.

Mrs McLeod: I appreciate the comments of my colleagues the members for Ottawa East, Cochrane South, Windsor-Riverside and of course Oshawa. I appreciate the member of the Conservative caucus's recognition of the importance of both fishing and hunting to northern Ontario's economy; of course it is important to southern Ontario's as well. I recognize that the member for Oshawa does have a northern connection fairly recently, so I can appreciate that he would understand the realities of fishing and hunting and, I hope, of forest management in northern Ontario.

His participation on the wildlife management board makes me think back to the caribou management. With only two minutes, I'm not going to dwell on that, but I would quarrel with the fact that it was shelved. I think it became part of all the questions that were being asked eventually at the class environmental assessment on timber management, which should really have been an environmental assessment on forest management and should have included all the related issues such as caribou management. But as you can appreciate, that would be a very complex undertaking and would have taken many more years and many more dollars.

I will just end by reiterating my four pleas, I think it is now, to this government to bring forward a bill and to take some pride in having moved forward on amendments to the Game and Fish Act which are conservation-focused. My plea, then, is to make this government a government of sincerity in its approach to conservation and to the

management of natural resources; first of all, that this act be seen as only one part of an overall policy of the management of our natural resources and that as much attention, along with resources, be given to the management of all of our natural resources and to the inter-relatedness of the management of our natural resources.

Fisheries, wildlife, forests, the economic benefit, the tourism benefit, the multiple users, the parks management are all part of a comprehensive approach to the management of natural resources. No conservation effort can be successful without adequate personnel and resources.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): I know I don't have to announce this, but I'm going to be splitting my time this morning with the member for Windsor-Riverside and the member for Cochrane South, because we all have things we want to say on this piece of legislation, which we are going to vote in favour of. But before we do that, it's important that we set the context within which this bill is going to unfold in the province.

I'm going to make reference to some comments that were made by some of the members opposite with regard to what they see as their movement to improve the ability of workers in the MNR field in northern Ontario to do their work. I suggest that rings hollow in northern Ontario. We all know that on the one hand they may be doing some things that are perhaps in the interests of conservation and planning, but when you fire most of the people who actually do that work, it doesn't matter how much mileage they have or how much gas money they have, if you don't have the people to drive the trucks, the trucks ain't going anywhere and there's no management going on and there's no planning going on.

Any member who has spent any time at all in northern Ontario will understand the importance of the Ministry of Natural Resources to that part of this wonderful province. Anybody who has lived in a community like Wawa or Chapleau or Blind River or Hornepayne or Terrace Bay will know of the importance of the Ministry of Natural Resources. In fact, when you speak of the government in that part of this country, 99% of the time you're speaking of the Ministry of Natural Resources, the people who manage the resources, who manage the forests, who manage the water, who manage the wildlife, who manage the lakes, who, as we know because we get to know them as neighbours and friends, have at heart the best interests of all those resources that are so important to those of us who choose to call northern Ontario home. We're comfortable that they were working as hard as they could in the best interests of us all.

We know that if you ravage any part of the natural resource we've inherited from our forefathers in this province, if we take advantage of it, exploit it in a way that is in a hurry, that is shortsighted and doesn't take into account the long-term implications, then we do everybody a disservice, because for the longest time the economy of this province and this country has been based on the fact that we have an abundance of natural resources. The natural resource sector shows up in almost every financial

paper you read or statement that's put out as the core, the base upon which the economy of this wonderful country and this province is built.

If you don't take that seriously and put in place the numbers of people required to make sure it's managed properly, if you put legislation in place, however wonderful, however progressive and however thoughtful it is, without the people in place to oversee that and to make sure that those who participate in the economy that is provided because we have those resources, at the end of the day we all lose. All of us lose, and most particularly those of us who call northern Ontario home lose.

We've made an investment up there. We've chosen to live in that part of Ontario because we feel good there. We feel there's a source of life there for us and that it's a place we want our children to feel at home in. We want the economy to evolve. We want it to be mixed. We want all the partners to play a role. We want the forest resource sector to do well. We want those people who come to our wonderful part of Ontario to find that there are fish still in the lakes, and when they catch those fish that they don't have two heads, that they're edible and don't carry disease.

It's so very important that those of us who call northern Ontario home, who make investments in northern Ontario, believe and understand and feel very concretely that the government we elect to protect those resources, to manage those resources, to put in place the checks and balances regarding those resources, is actually there to do that. I was saying to the member for Cochrane South, in any small community in northern Ontario, when you referred to the government, it was assumed you were talking about the Ministry of Natural Resources. We knew that there were people there who had the best interests of our livelihood, our future, in mind when they went out and did their work.

We don't feel that any more. We don't know where the government is any more. The government has disappeared. The feeling is that all of this has been turned over to the private sector. I have no quarrel with the private sector. I think they have a role to play as well in the economy that's evolving in this province, a role that's very important and that only they can play. But if you don't have a government that understands the interplay between the various private sector groups in a place like northern Ontario, then you have trouble and the resource doesn't get managed in a positive and progressive and creative way and at the end of the day we all suffer.

The resource will be under attack, under tremendous stress. The trees will disappear. There will no longer be the kind of fish available in the lakes and streams. Tourism operators will no longer be able to attract people to come into the area and enjoy the wilderness in the way that they've come to expect and that we've been developing over the last few years, both in the summer and in the winter. That concerns me.

Some of you who were listening last night, who were perhaps here in the House last night, will remember that I called for this place to have a moment of silence for all

those who have lost their jobs over the last two and a half years by way of decisions of this government to downsize and restructure. Literally thousands of hardworking, committed, long-serving civil servants in this province over the last two and a half years have been summarily dismissed, told they're not needed any more, that the experience they've engendered, the skill they've developed, the understanding they've come to about the work they do was no longer appreciated by this government, no longer seen as necessary, so they lost their jobs.

1110

As we move into this Christmas season, we're going to be asked this afternoon, as we were asked, I suppose, as I read the news clips this morning, by the Premier to be more positive, to think more optimistically about the future. I have to tell you, there are thousands of people in this province today who are not going to have a very happy and joyful Christmas, because they lost their job. They lost their job because of decisions that were made directly by this government because they worked for this government directly: people in the Ministry of Transportation, people in the Ministry of Education, people in the Ministry of the Environment and, to connect it to this bill we're speaking about here this morning, people in the Ministry of Natural Resources.

There wasn't a ministry more ravaged by this government than the Ministry of Natural Resources. Literally hundreds, thousands of people out of work, full-time and part-time people, who have committed their lives in many interesting ways, not just in the eight, 10 or 12 hours they put in every day re their job and the thing they do and get paid for, but in their love and interest above and beyond that in the natural resource they live in in northern Ontario. They were told they were no longer needed, that they could no longer count on the income they got to keep them going in this work of love they do. That's really unfortunate, and it's unfortunate most particularly at this time of year as we go into Christmas, a time when we're asked to renew and revisit and re-energize and come out recommitted to the work all of us feel so strongly about. That there will be literally thousands of people in northern Ontario who have over a long time worked in the natural resources sector out of work, anxious and concerned, their families not able to have the kind of Christmas they've become accustomed to, speaks volumes about the concern we have surrounding this bill.

As I said when I started, there are things in this bill that we can support. This bill is a move in the right direction, but if you don't have the MNR personnel to oversee, to enforce, to work with the interests out there around how we best manage the resource, then it's all for naught. You can have the best legislation in the world, you can have the best laws in the world, you can have the best plans in the world on paper, but if you don't have the people to carry them out, if you don't have the people to enforce the regulations, if you don't have the people to imagine new ways of bringing people together and making things happen, you're whistling in the wind. It's all a wish and a promise. There's nothing concrete, no foundation to it.

We shouldn't be surprised, because so much of what this government has done over the last two and a half years has been a whole lot of smoke and mirrors. What this government is about, in a very simple way — I think in a very understandable way, because now, two and a half years into their mandate, we're beginning to see in some very concrete ways what I'm about to say — is diminishing the role of government, diminishing the part government plays in the life of people, diminishing the ability of government to be a force for balance and planning in the province. They bring in legislation that usually has some fancy name attached to it that talks about something positive that's going to happen, but when we get into the bill to examine it — and we don't get to do that too often around here any more, because usually bills are brought in and rammed through at lightening speed. The only chance we ever get to actually get into any bill in a thought-out, reasonable way is when we resort to some so-called tactic in this place to make them slow down. For some political reason, because we're putting pressure on them, the public is starting to come alive. In view of what's going on, we force them to take a longer time at second reading, to send the bill out to public consultation so people have a chance to participate.

It's interesting. We're seeing that in spades these last couple of days of this session, because this government is very anxious to bring what they've done for the last two and a half years to an end, to pass legislation that, as in this instance, is good stuff. But however good, it needs to be processed, it needs to be taken out there so that people have a chance to see what's good about it, to analyse it so they begin to know what's bad about it. Very thoughtful people out there will probably bring to the government some ideas on how this might roll out and cause problems a year or two or three or five years out. But because of the new process in this place, the new rules that were brought in, we don't get a chance to do that on hardly anything any more. Democracy is diminished, the ability of this legislative precinct to do its work, as it was imagined by those who developed the British parliamentary system, is diminished, and the role we can play, speaking on behalf of our constituents, representing our constituents, is scoped down in a very serious and significant way.

All of this should raise some level of anxiety, concern and interest in people out there, as this government now begins to — you saw it yesterday, you saw it in the newspapers this morning and you'll see it on the TV tonight and over the weekend. The Premier is talking about a new era, a new day for this government, not wanting to be fighting with people any more, wanting to be conciliatory, wanting to find ways to work together. Well, I warn people and challenge people and ask people not to be fooled, to remember what has been done over the last two and a half years, to take a good look around them, to see the direct or indirect impact of the decisions of this government on the lives of, if not themselves, their neighbours or some family member.

Look at this bill in the context of all that and ask yourself if this is not just another exercise in public rela-

tions and communication by a government that's desperate to do anything at all that has a positive spin to it so they might overshadow the very destructive decisions you've made to diminish the role and the size and the impact and effect and the ability of government in this province to do anything on behalf of anybody. Literally thousands of people this Christmas will not have a paycheque due to direct decisions by your government to get rid of them, to lay them off, to tell them they were no longer useful, were no longer necessary, that we didn't need them any more.

Bills like the one we're dealing with here today, this Bill 139, the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act, however positive and progressive it may be, will not mean a whole heck of a lot if we don't have the people out there in the communities and towns and streets of this wonderful province to work with it, to work with the people whom it will affect directly and to enforce whatever regulation becomes the order of the day so that it might be a positive initiative for all of us who call Ontario home, in particular those of us who call northern Ontario home.

I will at this time turn this over to my very able colleague from Cochrane South, who will have a few more thoughts to put on the record about this bill.

1120

Again, I want to challenge people out there: Pay attention. Don't be lulled into thinking that just because, after two and a half years of really difficult times imposed by this government on your life, that now they're going to change their spots, now they're going to change their tune, that now it's all going to be wonderful somehow. It's not. Through this Christmas period, I ask you to talk to your friends and neighbours, your family members, and ask them how concretely and directly the standard of living they've come to expect and appreciate and think was perhaps going to be there for a while has been affected very negatively.

I ask them to recommit themselves to the fight that was so effectively brought to the attention of the people of Ontario by the teachers some weeks ago when they went out on their political protest, giving up two weeks of wages to make a statement to this government that what it was doing was absolutely wrong; that this was not a government that was going too fast and doing too much but a government that was heading in the absolutely wrong direction. No matter what they do to try to smooth those waters by, for example, at this last minute — we only have some probably five or six hours of debate time left in this place — bringing in a bill that has something positive in it, while at the same time firing, laying off, terminating people who will be necessary to make sure the bill becomes effective, to be lulled into thinking that somehow is going to be the answer and that this government has somehow learned a lesson, that it's going to be different and that things will at the end of the day work out — but they won't.

In this province, to have a stable economy, to have an economy that includes everybody, to have an economy that's going to take us in a positive way into the next century, including everybody both at the front end and at the back end, we need strong government. We need a

government that cares. We need a government that wants to do the job that it is and was elected to do. We need a government that has some thoughtful ideas about how we might all be included in this process, so this bill, as I said, however positive, however constructive and a move forward, will not contribute in any significant way to that end, to a stable economy, particularly in the small communities of northern Ontario where we are so exposed to the volatility of the marketplace and so under stress whenever there is a downturn.

If we don't have a government that is willing to put the resources in place, that is willing to make sure the personnel are in place to help us, to work with us through those very difficult times, we will not be able to look forward to a future that will include everybody, that will be stable, that will be hopeful and that will be in the best interests of the people who so deservedly need to be recognized and supported and helped as they try to participate in the life of the province of Ontario.

Thank you very much, and I now turn it over to my colleague from Cochrane South.

The Acting Speaker: Rob Brown, who is a page here in the Legislature — this is the pages' last day, as you may know — would have liked to have introduced his father, Rob, in the west gallery, and his friend Heidi, his classmates at St Patrick's School in Kinkora, Doug, Kevin and Ashlay, and he's sorry he's not able to introduce them to you.

As you know, Kinkora is in beautiful Ellice township and Perth county. The township of Ellice anchors the northwest corner of Stratford, and I assured him I was not able to introduce these very important people to you either.

The Chair recognizes the member for Cochrane South.

Mr Bisson: That's a heck of a way to get a speech, Speaker.

Interjection.

Mr Bisson: No, I wouldn't ask him to withdraw. I think they're good people who came down, are proud of what their son is doing here. In fact, if Rob wants to wheel behind me, he might even be able to get on television — the rules will allow that to happen — so everybody will know who we're talking about.

Speaker, I want to ask you a question, and that question is, what do you know of fish habitat? I'm being serious here.

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener): He does know a lot about it.

Mr Bisson: He knows a lot about fish, I think, but I don't know about the habitat side.

The point I make is simply this: that the people who know most about fish habitat used to work for the Ministry of Natural Resources, and we had a number of people who worked across Ontario for the Ministry of Natural Resources who were experts when it came to the management of the fishing industry and the wildlife and game within the province of Ontario. Those people, quite frankly, did a very good job of making sure that the rules by which we operate that fishing industry and operate sports fishery overall were done in such a way that they

looked for the preservation and making sure we had fish habitat over the longer term.

Those people not only did that, but they also ensured that any activity that went on in the bush, when it came to forest industries or mining companies or whatever it might be, was being done in a way that would not impact on the ability of the fish to reproduce. We talk about fish habitat. So when I asked you the question at the very beginning, "What do you know of fish habitat?" it's probably as much as I do, which is I know how to catch a fish, but I don't really know a lot about habitat. That's why we have those people within the Ministry of Natural Resources to do that work.

Unfortunately, we're in a very peculiar situation right now. The government has introduced this bill, which is a positive bill — we give them full credit for it — Bill 139, and it's a bill that has been worked on for many years. I know back in the time of the Liberal government, the NDP government and now the Conservative government, various governments have done work to make sure that we learn from our mistakes about how we destroyed fish habitat and that we're able to build regulations and laws that are able to say, yes, we have to allow economic activity to happen in the forest, we have to allow companies to go out and harvest trees, but it has to be done in a way that doesn't affect the wildlife and the fish habitat in which they're operating.

The Ministry of Natural Resources over the years learned a lot by working in the bush, by observing what contractors were doing out there, by observing what was happening and how that impacted on the fish habitat, and they learned a lot about how to do that job properly. The unfortunate part is that the Ministry of Natural Resources, all those people who worked there, are now gone — not all but pretty well all of them.

One of the first decisions this government made under the former minister, Mr Hodgson, was they fired over half the MNR staff across Ontario, so when you go into a community like Hearst, Kapuskasing, White River, Chapleau, Foleyet, Gogama, Timmins or wherever it might be in northern Ontario, you don't have the people in the field that we used to have to make sure that whatever activity is going on in the bush doesn't impact on our ability to make sure that the fish habitat and the wildlife habitat is safe for future generations.

The government says: "Oh, we realize we messed up over here. We realize we're in a position where we have taken away the ability of the ministry to both police what's happening in the bush and at the same time do the kind of scientific work that needs to be done to develop better mechanisms by which we manage our wildlife, so we've got to do something."

They came and introduced this act, and they said, "We've got a very good piece of legislation, An Act to promote the conservation of fish and wildlife through the revision of the Game and Fish Act, called Bill 139," and brought it into this House. For that we give them credit, because there are a few problems with this act, but all and all, it's not a bad bill. But it's empty, c'est vide. Why? Because the ministry is not going to have the ability to go

out and enforce what's in this act once it's passed. The government has laid off 50% of the MNR workers, and they're not going to have the ability to keep on top of the ongoing work that goes on within the forest industry to learn how to better manage, not only our forest industry but the fish and wildlife areas themselves, because that's how this whole thing developed.

There are two problems. The first problem is we have an act that has no mechanism by which to enforce it, but the second one is that the government doesn't seem to understand that just because things are done in a particular way doesn't mean they're being done right. If we look at the practices of, let's say, the mining industry 40 years ago, when it came to how they did work on the surface on a very simple issue like getting rid of their tailings — there's nothing simple about it, but disposition of tailings, 40 or 50 years ago they did it in a particular way because they didn't know any better, and it had a great impact on the fish and wildlife in areas where they were operating. Over time there was public outcry. People in the north who lived by mining communities got up and said, "This is wrong."

We see the example of Kamiskotia mine that killed an entire river system. We take a look at issues like Matachewan that killed another river system. They said: "We can't have that happen. There has got to be a better way to dispose of tailings." So the Ministry of Natural Resources along with the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines did a lot of work with the industry to learn how to do it right. Yes, it meant there was a price attached to that. The mining industry had to learn to dispose of tailings in a safer way, which meant it cost more money, but there was a net positive impact when it came to our environment in northern Ontario to where now you're seeing companies like Kidd Creek operate huge tailings in a fairly safe manner when it comes to our wildlife.

There are always things that could happen, but by and large, if you look at what's happening with the disposition of tailings, at companies like Kidd Creek or Dome Mines and the brand-new superpit they built two or three years ago, a huge increase in production in their milling capacity which meant there was a lot more tailings going out, they did that in a way that is a heck of a lot better as compared to what it was 40 years before. Why? For two reasons: There were ministry staff in place to learn how to do these things right, so they were able to monitor what was going on with the good and the bad examples within the industry and how it impacted on fish habitat, and they had legislation drafted to set the rules by which the mining operators had to operate.

The mining companies didn't like that initially. I remember having discussions with many of them saying: "This is far too onerous for us. It's going to cost us money." It was doom and gloom. But I think that was a minority within the mining industry. I think most mining executives understood it's not only good public relations to operate a safe mining operation, as in safe tailings, but it's also very good business. They understood there was an equation between the two.

I think the Ministry of Natural Resources, along with the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines, was playing a fairly positive role when it came to working with industry in the last four or five years to find out how we balance off the interests of the mining companies to make a dollar — because we want them to make lots of dollars; that's what pays the good wages in northern Ontario; that's how people get jobs that pay \$50,000, \$60,000, \$70,000, \$100,000 a year — and at the same time, when they're conducting that activity we call mining and disposing of tailings, the tailings are disposed of in such a way that they doesn't impact our environment.

Northerners, of all people, understand the importance of the environment. Although we work, by and large, in very intensive industries within the natural resource area, this is also our playground. It's where we go to spend our time. You come to Timmins or Hearst or White River or Sault Ste Marie or Thunder Bay or whatever place in northern Ontario —

Mr Lessard: I'm looking forward to it.

Mr Bisson: My good friend from Windsor-Riverside is going to be coming to Sault Ste Marie in February to meet with people in the college system. He'll get an opportunity, as he has in the past.

We understand that, yes, we go to work in the morning or on day shift or afternoon or graveyard, but when we have time off, where do we spend most of our time? We go camping in the summer with our families and friends; we go on fishing trips with our buddies, with our family and friends; we go hunting in the fall; we go for rides in the bush with our motorcycles, or we do backpacking or we do snowshoeing or we do cross-country skiing. We utilize the forest and the bush and the area around our communities as our method of entertainment. People here in Toronto go to the show or the opera or the bars or whatever. I'm not saying they don't have an appreciation for the environment, but I think northerners relate to the environment far more than most people could imagine, because it's both where we work and where we play.

As a northerner, when I see the government of the day say, "I want to bring forward a bill that's going to protect the northern environment," I applaud that. I think that's good. I give Mike Harris and John Snobelen and the previous minister before that, Mr Hodgson, full credit. This is a positive step in the right direction. I have no problem at all. There are a few parts in here we can all pick at and find ways of making adjustments to make the bill a little bit better, but by and large I give you very good marks on this bill.

But where I'm a little bit cynical is how you're going to carry out the mechanisms of this bill, because you're really not going to be able to. We know, and you know, that you've cut the MNR staff by over 50%. Those weren't people who were just there spending their time pulling on elastics in an office and doing nothing. The people at the MNR offices across northern Ontario, as my friend from Sault Ste Marie said earlier, were an integral part of our community. They are the people who were out in the bush watching what was going on. They are the people who did the scientific studies that needed to be

done to make sure we learn from our mistakes and correct the way we do things so that we preserve our northern environment, and they worked with industry to make sure that was done in a positive way.

I say to the government, I'm a little bit cynical about this bill. I will support it because I think it's a step in the right direction, but I really worry about how you're going to be able to enforce some of this bill.

The other thing I want to say before I go over some of the details of the bill — my good friend Mr Martin left with the notes I lent him a second ago, so I'll do this by memory.

I'm also cynical for one other reason. At the same time as the former Minister of Natural Resources, Mr Hodgson, introduced this bill in the House, I was made aware of a memo that I saw — I forget if it was in Chapleau or Foleyet or Timmins I saw it. It was on one of my tours. I saw an internal memo within the Ministry of Natural Resources that said they were not going to send people out to watch what was going on in the issuance of licences when it came to creek crossings.

The former Minister of Natural Resources looks at me a little bit weird, but that's what's happening in your former ministry. It may not have been you. I'm a bit surprised. If you didn't know it, I'm even more worried.

The deputy minister sent a memo out to all field staff saying: "When a logging operator comes into our office and says, 'I'm applying for a permit to do a creek crossing,' we do not have the staff to go out and do the field investigation. Issue the permit and basically hope to heck they do it right." It didn't say that exactly, but that was the intent of the memo.

I'll tell you, there are some operators I can think of, like the Nadeaus who are operating up in the Chapleau area, who do an excellent job and try to do a good job and are very conscientious as a medium-sized contractor in the bush to make sure they don't destroy the environment. I look at people like Ben and Georges Nadeau and others who are out there trying to earn a living in the forest by harvesting the trees in the best way they can, to make a livelihood for them and their families and at the same time provide good-paying jobs for the people who work for them, but they are also very environmentally conscious. That's a lot of our contractors in northern Ontario, but not everybody is like the Ben Nadeaus and Georges Nadeaus of this world.

There are others, and the minister would know because he's had to fine some of them before, who say: "I'm pretty tight this month. I'm not making very much. The mill has lowered the price of lumber." I'm not going to name names of mills because, I'll tell you, there are a few of them that have a habit of doing that. When it comes to the amount of money the contractor gets for his wood, sometimes it's not fair compared to what they're getting in the market when they sell that finished product. But that's for another debate.

The point I make is that there are some small contractors out there who, let's say, are in a hurry to make a dollar and are not very good at what they do. They figure the way to make a dollar is to cut corners when it comes to

how we cross creeks, how we get gravel out of sandpits to build roads, how we approach the whole area in which we're doing our cuts.

Eventually these people will get caught, I hope, because of the changes we made in the Crown Forest Sustainability Act, which I think was a good way of balancing off the need of industry to do a job right and for them to do some self-policing on their own and the ministry being able to keep an eye on it. The problem is, once the damage has been done, in many cases it's going to take a lot of years to undo it.

When I talk to people like Ben Nadeau, who is a long-time operator in our area, he says: "Listen, Gilles, I've always believed that I've got to do my job right, and if I don't it costs me money. If I don't do my job right, a lot of these forest companies are not going to want me to work for them." You can't go to work for a company like Malette Waferboard or Malette lumber or Abitibi if you've got a very bad reputation, but if you're —

Interjection.

Mr Bisson: For the most part, that's true, but there are some — I didn't hear you.

Mr Ouellette: Are they back in Timmins?

Mr Bisson: Of course they are. The point I make is simply that there are a number of operators, especially the smaller ones, who operate on crown units who turn around and say: "I'm going to try to make a buck real quick. I'm going to cross this creek the best I can. I'm going to put the culvert in but I'm not going to do the kind of preparatory work that needs to be done to save the fish habitat." By the time the ministry finds out, when the audit is done five years later, because they don't have people going in the bush, that's when we're going to find out there's a problem, or when some fisherman comes by who's been catching nice speckled trout in that creek.

I've been one. You go out on the split rock or the redstone to do some good fishing in a good speckled trout area. You're going to go out there one day and you're going to say: "Jeez, when I was here last spring, I had a good catch. I brought home my limit of five trout and the fishing was really, really good." They're going to get there, they're going to put their line in the water and not a nibble, because somebody up the stream messed it up by doing an improper crossing of a creek. I've seen that happen in areas. I look at the fishing on the I've fished for years and years.

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I'll tell you, from the work the Kamiskotia mine did and the tailings that went into the Kamiskotia River, the fishing has been affected in a river that's actually up-river from the Kamiskotia. You wouldn't think that's possible, but I guess the fish come through there. The net effect is that we have a lot less trout there than we used to have before.

I say to the government again, you're taking a step in the right direction with the legislation, but you won't have the mechanism to enforce this and that's really the sad part.

Mr Lessard: Too little, too late.

Mr Bisson: Too little, too late.

The other thing I want to say is this: I understand on the one hand the need for the government to say, "We need to try to find ways to involve industry so they themselves become more responsible." I understand the self-regulation, and to a certain extent the self-policing, that needs to be done within the forest industry. I think that's a step in the right direction. I have no quarrel with the government on that, because by and large you have some fairly good operators out there who are trying to do a good job. They understand that it's not only smart public relations to operate smartly when it comes to how you do your business in the bush, but it's also good business.

But I have a problem when the ministry takes away its capacity to go and do spot inspections of what's going on in the bush. I understand that people like Abitibi, Tembec, Malette and others, now under the Sustainable Forestry Development Act, put together their forest plan. They've got to work towards that plan and at the end of five years we go back and we audit it. If they've done a good job, that's fine; if not, we take the money out of the fund and we have them pay for it. I understand. That's a good mechanism and that's a good way of doing self-policing.

My problem is, especially with the smaller contractors on the crown units, I think we're really setting up some dangerous situations when it comes to how people can do damage and we won't have the ability to find out until somebody complains or after we've done the audit. I would much rather see what we had before, where you had MNR people in the bush who would say, "Hey, what are you doing there, putting a culvert in the way that you are?"

I know the small contractors used to get upset. They would come and see me when we were in government and say, "Jeez, I was putting in a culvert the other day and some MNR guy came up and he told me I couldn't do it this way and I want to make a complaint." I said, "Well, what were you doing?" The guy was setting up the culvert in such a way that it would destroy the fish habitat and I said: "I think the MNR's doing their job. That's what they're there for." That's how basically a lot of these people learned how to do it right, by the MNR going into the bush and making sure that they did it right, so at least we caught it early on before it became actual damage. I say to the government again, in some ways I think this bill is a bit of public relations.

I also want to touch on the regulatory powers, some of the specifics of this bill because there are a couple of issues that have cropped up over my years as the member for Cochrane South. People have come and complained to me in my office. I think of Mr Don Collins, who comes to complain about this and others, actually good friends of the Tories who came to complain about this particular issue. I'm surprised that the Tories are going in this direction because it's quite contrary to what I would expect the Tories to do when it came to this issue, especially when people like Mr Collins, who holds you in such esteem, would find out about this.

In the regulatory-making sections of the act, part X, I believe it is, which is regulation, the government is giving

itself increased powers to do a number of things around access roads. Access roads, as we know what they are, that's when a forest company goes out and they have a particular harvest they've got to do way back in the back 40 in the bush. They build the road, they go in, they do their forest activity and basically when they're done, they come out, they close the road off and they shut the public from going in in some cases.

That has angered a lot of anglers and hunters in my area because those are traditional fishing spots and hunting grounds for many of the people who live in our community, especially in the area around Foleyet-Chapleau, where there's been a lot of activity in this end where the MNR has gone back and they've basically close the road once the forest company has finished its work. People have been going fishing in those areas for years and years, and all of a sudden they show up one day to go fishing on their annual spring fishing expedition with their friends and they find out that the road is closed. All there is the sign; they didn't even know there was a sign there.

One of the things that I pushed for in government was to say that we need to find a way to balance off the need of the anglers to get access to their traditional areas of fishing so that they can keep on doing that, but in a way that respects the pressure on the fish habitat.

The other point I was always making in government, and I thought I would have seen it in this bill because I know that our government was prepared to do it — I'd spoken to Howard Hampton, the former Minister of Natural Resources, about this and he told me that he was prepared to do it — and that's the mechanism by which we closed down these roads; that if a road is closed down, there has to be sufficient public notice so that if people who have been interested in that area want to go and have their two cents' worth when it comes to what's going on, they are able to bring forward their points of view to the MNR to make sure that their views are heard about the traditional access that they had and in some way limit the access.

You know, if somebody's been in there for fishing for a long time and they can establish that they've been fishing there for years and that's one of their traditional areas, special consideration would be given to those people to still get access when the forest company has pulled out of there. In some cases the forest company might have made the road better, but there was an initial road or trail that was built by the family 15, 20, 30 years ago that they've been using all of those years and it happens to be that the forest company drove a road through there and now because they've gone out and the ministry shuts it down, they're not able to get back in. I look at this act and I don't see that particular issue fixed. In fact, I would argue that in some ways they've given increasingly powers to the minister to close down even more of these roads.

I think of people like Mr Collins in Timmins and I'm telling you, I don't think he's going to be very happy when he finds out that the minister has given himself more power under section 10 of the act to not only close down access roads, but there is no sufficient provision in here to

give a good public process by which Mr Collins and others can get involved when it comes to getting their say about what should and shouldn't be closed down when it comes to access in the bush.

Again, I think this is a good example of how if you hurry through legislation without a good public process of dialogue through public hearings — we only had one day of public hearings on this — those kinds of issues aren't sufficiently dealt with and the public feels somewhat alienated. I would argue in the case of Mr Collins and others that they will be greatly offended by what they see in this bill when it comes to the powers that you've been given under section 10.

I look at sub (7) and sub (12). When I read those particular areas, especially (12), they seem to give the minister much more power to shut roads down, and I'm somewhat concerned about that. Yes, I understand that there are areas that are protected and we have to make sure we do that in such a way that that works out well, but other than that, I think the government is maybe going a little bit too far when it comes to that.

The other point I want to make is on another section of this bill, "Part IV of the bill deals with the sale, purchase and transport of wildlife and fish. The buying or selling of game wildlife and specially protected wildlife is prohibited." I think that is actually a step in the right direction because I think this speaks to a number of issues that I've seen in the past where some people — and again I've got to say, Mr Speaker, I know you know quite a bit about this because I know you're an avid fisherman; at least that's what I've been told. But there are some people unfortunately who would go in and actually operate as commercial fishermen when they were not licensed to do so. I think this act deals with this in a fairly progressive way in ensuring that those people are properly licensed and making sure they're not out there doing commercial fishing where really all they should be doing is recreational fishing.

But again I say to the government, how are you going to enforce this? I really wonder how you're going to enforce it.

Under part VI there's another section here that says: "Part VI of the bill contains provisions dealing with licences and with authorizations given by the Minister of Natural Resources. For example, provision is made for a hearing before a hearings officer with respect to the refusal of certain licences and with respect to conditions imposed on commercial fishing licences."

I think this is really positive. I think this is good. They've given the public, finally, the ability to have a hearing if they've been refused a licence to do commercial fishing. Before, it was very difficult to get such a hearing. Why didn't we do this kind of process when it came to the whole issue about how the Ministry of Natural Resources and the forestry companies deal with the closure of forest access roads? Why didn't we have some kind of public process where the public is able to have its say? I think we could have looked at that and made some amendments in order to allow that to happen.

Under part VIII of the bill, which deals with enforcement: "Conservation officers are appointed under section 87. Part VIII provides for the inspection by conservation officers of firearms, vehicles, boats, aircraft, buildings and other places (sections 88 to 90) and for searches and seizures." Part VIII also deals with the question of arrests and entry on private land.

This speaks to a problem that I know my good friend Mr Chequis at the Ministry of Natural Resources in Timmins has raised with me a number of times. Walter — he's retired now — was for years one of the key conservation officers in our area and worked for the ministry for a number of years. Quite an interesting, colourful character as well. Knew his job, knew how to do it well and I think by and large did a very good job for the province of Ontario.

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One of the problems that Walter had explained to me along with some of his colleagues who were basically the COs in our area was that they did not have the kind of powers they needed to do the kinds of searches that needed to be done to deal with people who are not doing things properly when it comes to hunting and fishing. Often what they had to do, if they had reason to believe that there was something going on that was illegal, at times — not all the time; we have to understand that — they had to get the Ontario Provincial Police involved, which meant to say that you had to call out the OPP to enforce the law that the conservation officer had found somebody was breaking. I think this is not a bad thing because it gives the conservation officers, under section 8 of the bill, additional powers to go in and investigate somebody who they suspect has broken the law when it comes to fishing and when it comes to hunting. I think most people would agree that if somebody is out there poaching or doing something that's outside of the rules, most northerners would agree that shouldn't happen, and if it does happen, I'm sure they want the MNR to step in and stop that from happening. By and large, people in the north understand that if you go fishing and you take 50 pickerel out of the lake every time you go, it's not going to take a long time, if enough people do that, before there won't be any more pickerel to catch the next time you go fishing.

The idea here is that they're going to give the conservation officers who are left, because I've got to mention there are not very many left these days with the cuts we've had in MNR — at least the ones who are left are going to get some additional powers in this bill to go in and search the boat, search the camp, search the vehicle without the assistance of the Ontario Provincial Police. I think that makes some sense, because why pay duplicate manpower to do what the conservation officer is paid to do in the first place.

I've got to say, just in passing, about Mr Chequis, Walter has done a really good job in our area. In talking to Walter just before he retired — I was chatting with him about a month ago — I was asking him: "Walter, how do you feel? You've been working for the MNR all of these years and you're coming to retirement." I figured, Walter, he loves the bush — you've got to know this guy. He does

it for a living and then when he's off he goes back into the bush to relax. He really loves what he does. I've got to say my hat is off to Walter. My friend from Windsor-Riverside will find this interesting. I said to him, "Walter, you've been working for the MNR all of these years. How do you feel about leaving?" thinking he'd say, "I'm kind of sad, I really enjoyed the job that I was doing." He said: "Gilles, I'm glad to be going. I'm really glad to be going." That took me aback, because I know how much Walter loves the bush and loves what he does.

You know what it was? The whole mandate and the whole operation of MNR has changed in such a way that it wasn't a pleasure for Walter to go in to work any more as it had been in the past, with the cuts this government had done, the decimation of the Ministry of Natural Resources; 2,100 people were laid off in the Ministry of Natural Resources, 50% of the staff. Walter was saying: "Listen, we don't have the ability any more to do the kind of work that needs to be done to ensure that our forests are maintained and preserved for the future generation. You know, Gilles," he said, "I'm glad to be going. I pity the guys who are coming behind me because they're going to have one heck of a job, considering where this government is going." He told me, "When you go down to Queen's Park, make sure to let that government know how some of us feel."

On behalf of Walter and other COs I'm telling the minister: What you have done is not only bad for the environment but it's really, really bad when it comes to what's going to happen to our future generations and their ability to go out and enjoy the area I grew up in, that I was able to, along with Walter and others, call my playground, where I would go and spend most of my time. I say to this government, you've really gone in the wrong direction.

The other thing I have to say in the few minutes I have left: I again want to say that we will vote in favour of this bill. The government has tried to step in the right direction in putting this legislation together. I think a couple of the sections I quoted are steps in the right direction. They can always be improved; no government gets it perfect, including my former government. But the point is that this is a step in the right direction.

I've got to say that this is really a public relations exercise on the part of the government. This is a government that says on the one hand: "Look at us, we care for the environment. We have a bill, we can show what we've done." When you go out in the election next year or the year after and you're a candidate in northern Ontario or in central or southwest Ontario, you can go and show the people that this government did something for the environment: "We've got this bill called Bill 139. That's our record." Will people remember that the same government that introduced this bill basically took away all the mechanisms to enforce it? I really wonder, will people know?

Interjection.

Mr Bisson: I was going to come to that. Part of what we have to do here in this debate is make sure that people understand what the government has done, but when it

comes to the next election, I think people will remember. It's one of those things; it's like a sleeping giant. The public at one point starts to recognize what this government is doing because they start to see examples of how things will be done in Mike Harris's new Ontario, when the Ministry of the Environment or the Ministry of Agriculture or the Ministry of Mines or the Ministry of Natural Resources may have good legislation on the books to be do what they've got to do, but they will not have the people to go out and enforce it and do the kind of work that needs to be done to make sure these acts are enforced in the proper way.

When we see some bad examples of things like we saw in the past, the old Kamiskotia mine, the Matachewan mine, the lake that we have in the middle of the city of Timmins, between Schumacher and Timmins, in front of the old A&W, where the old McIntyre mine tailings were dug up and left in disgrace, and still today lie in disgrace behind a fence because we allowed a mining company to go and basically rip out the tailings to make the money, then leave us with a hell of a mess. We know that's what these laws are all about. They're to prevent that kind of stuff from happening. When people see those kinds of examples, people will remember it was Mike Harris who took away the ability for the government to respond to that.

The only point I would make is this: Yes, the private sector is very important. You're not going to see me or any other member of our caucus argue against the right of Abitibi, Malette lumber or any of the other forest companies or mining companies to go out and do a good job. Nobody is going to argue that. They provide the well-paying jobs in northern Ontario that people work at, that people make a good living at, and we have a good standard of living. Nobody argues that. But there is a role for government, and that's what this government seems to forget, that the government can and should play a positive role in our northern economy. The MNR along with northern development and mines are two of the key ministries that make sure we have a balance between the right of the forest company and the mining company to make a buck in creating the jobs that are so important for our northern economy, but at the same time protecting our environment to make sure it's there for future generations in the years to come.

I think many people will remember, come the next election, that this government may have introduced a positive bill but they have been very short in responding to the bill by enforcement because of the cuts they have made at the ministry.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Lessard: I just want to pick up where my friend left off. He talked about the balance between the interests of the private sector and the importance to protect public resources. I think that applies quite specifically with respect to Peche Island, which is an island in the Detroit River, which is part of my riding. That is an island that was purchased by the province in 1972 for \$424,000, then it was named a provincial park in 1974. So that's part of our provincial natural resource base. After this govern-

ment was elected, it got an evaluation of this park because it didn't think it had any provincial significance. Lo and behold, they got the value of this to be \$1.9 million and now they want to sell this island to the city of Windsor. The city asked to take over responsibility of that island for a dollar, but that was an offer that was refused by this government.

I think it is a really dangerous approach towards protection of public resources in Ontario if we decide we're going to put a pricetag on all our public resources, all the provincial parks in Ontario, and say that if they don't derive enough income to sustain themselves, then we're going to sell them all off. I think that's something, when we're considering what is proposed in Bill 139 with respect to protection of game and fish and with respect to the protection of our resources, we always have to keep in mind, that there is an important role for government to play in the protection of our public resources, that we can't put a value on these things the way the private sector does and that we shouldn't be just, holus-bolus, privatize our public resources or turn over control of them. We need to protect them and maintain them. We need the resources to do that. That's why I'm concerned about the tremendous cuts that have been made to the natural resources staff.

Mr Gerretsen: I would just like to reiterate some of the comments that have been made here today. When you look at what's happened to the budget at the Ministry of Natural Resources, it has declined by \$150 million. Two years ago they spent \$519 million and this year they're projected to spend \$369 million. That is a decline of almost 33%. When you realize that an awful lot of this money is going towards the enforcement aspect of the various laws that this Legislature has made over the years, you realize that getting rid of the conservation officers is simply not the right thing to do.

We always have to be mindful that it is great to put a law into effect, but if we don't have the enforcement mechanisms, then people will not adhere to it and will do whatever the heck they want. So I just implore the Minister of Natural Resources to fight the good fight that he has to in cabinet and to try to get the funding that he requires to make sure that both this law and the other laws that are under his direction are properly enforced in this province.

In the northern part of my own county of Frontenac there are a number of Ministry of Natural Resources offices, and I know those offices have been decimated in that people who are no longer employed there. Particularly to a lot of the smaller municipalities, the employment base the Ministry of Natural Resources provides is significant, and although we agree with this law, we do not agree with the fact that the enforcement officers are no longer there to make sure the law is being adhered to.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Cochrane South has two minutes to respond.

Mr Lessard: There may be some more responses.

Mr Bisson: I take it there are no more responses. I just want to thank my two colleagues for responding to what I had to say. I hope the government listened to what we had

to say, especially about Peche Island, because I know that's a very important issue to the people of Windsor, as raised by the member for Windsor-Riverside.

I also want to urge the members to vote on this particular bill. We think it's an important bill and we're not going to put up anybody else after. We want to see this bill passed. I hope the government doesn't stall the debate any more and that we're able to pass this very important legislation.

The Acting Speaker: Is there any further debate?

Mr Gerretsen: Should the House not adjourn, Mr Speaker? It's past 12 o'clock.

The Acting Speaker: I want to know if there's further debate.

Mr Gerretsen: Yes, we have. We have more speakers on this.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: It being 12 noon, the House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1204 to 1331.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ARTS AND CULTURAL FUNDING

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur): As we come to the end of 1997, I'm very pleased to have the opportunity to send a year-end message to the Minister of Culture on behalf of the Ontario Liberal caucus, a message that I hope the minister takes to heart and responds to by changing the direction her party has taken so far in its mandate.

Minister, I don't need to tell you that after two and a half years your government's legacy as far as the arts, cultural and heritage communities in this province are concerned is nothing more than a series of brutal successive cuts that have devastated the cultural sector. An almost 50% cut to the Ontario Arts Council, which is truly the research and development arm for the cultural sector, has left the council and those it funds absolutely reeling.

Your lack of support to public galleries, museums, symphonies, non-profit theatres, arts service organizations and individual artists has left the cultural sector wondering whether they can survive.

As rumours continue to swirl that your government is planning a further cut to the Ontario Arts Council and in fact may be moving to dissolve it entirely, it becomes all the more important that you speak out now in defence of the OAC and the valuable role it plays in our cultural lives and in the economy.

May I say, Minister, your comment yesterday in question period that "We are not in the business of giving out grants" does nothing to reassure those of us who hoped your recent appointment would herald a new approach to this government's support for the arts.

I say to you today, if you truly want to make an impact as the Minister of Culture, you should formally announce

that no further cuts will be made to the OAC; but if you truly want to make a difference, you'll return funding levels for the OAC at least back to 1996-97 levels.

HOLIDAY MESSAGES

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): It being half to three quarters of the way through this government's agenda, at the end of this session we're going to prorogue and we are going to see, as we predicted, Mike Harris and his minions begin to spin a story out there of peace and cooperation. As a matter of fact, he started it yesterday. An article in the Globe and Mail has him extolling the virtues of his government and what he has done and what's going to happen in this province. The reality out there is telling a completely different story.

Another article in today's paper talks about the leaders of our church communities. Almost every major church community in this province is really upset, angry and concerned. "Churches Strive to Cover Slashed Social Services," but they know they don't have the money. "A Crash Campaign to Combat the Cold." "Students Getting the Shaft." This is the story everywhere we look, and people should be aware of that.

In spite of that, I'd like to take a couple of minutes today to say to the people of Ontario and particularly to my own constituents that I wish them a merry Christmas, a happy Hanukkah, a happy Ramadan and particularly a happy new year and to let them know that in spite of what Mike Harris is doing, there really isn't anything that will come at us that we, together, can't handle, because we're a good province, and our caucus will be —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you.

BRUCE GENERATING STATION

Mrs Barbara Fisher (Bruce): I would like to share with the members present an important discussion I had with the Minister of Energy, Science and Technology, the Honourable Jim Wilson, regarding the Bruce nuclear site. The minister expressed confidence in the future of the BNPD site. He was clearly concerned, as I have been over the past week, about speculation over the state of Bruce A since the leak of a draft report of the Legislature's select committee. These hurtful rumours serve no other purpose than to create confusion and uncertainty in my riding.

Minister Wilson feels that the committee heard enough evidence, that of 100 witnesses and 200 submissions, to indicate that the nuclear recovery plan needs to be reviewed in the context of the white paper. I strongly agree. This is good news for the people of Bruce. A recommendation from the committee requiring Hydro to review the current plan would breathe new life into Ontario Hydro's original decision to lay up all four units at Bruce A in March 1998.

This government's overriding goal, one that I will not allow to be compromised, is to ensure that Hydro's nuclear facilities return to the highest levels of safety and performance. I'm totally convinced this can be done without laying up all four reactors simultaneously at Bruce

A. More important, I have heard direct testimony from the chairman of Ontario Hydro, Mr Bill Farlinger, indicating that Hydro is flexible.

As I head home to the riding of Bruce for the holiday season, I look forward to discussing the recommendations of the report with my constituents.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): I have raised in the House several times now the abrupt closure two weeks ago of two organizations that provide mental health services in Kingston, the Clubhouse Activity Centre and the Community Crisis Centre, and the devastating effect that is having in our community. You will remember that two weeks ago, without warning, Ministry of Health officials closed the centres, dismissed the staff on four hours' notice and changed the locks. Since then, no progress has been made in reopening these centres and providing the necessary support to the hundreds who use and need their services.

The closings have caused incredible anxiety among those who depend on their valuable services, and our community has rallied behind them. We are extremely concerned that the closures have jeopardized their safety and wellbeing. On Monday evening, Kingston city council unanimously passed a motion calling for the Minister of Health to immediately re-establish these centres and consult with the clients and their families, caregivers and mental health agencies to develop a plan to best serve the mental health needs of the individuals involved in our community.

The community and I want to work with the minister to resolve the situation as soon as possible. The Hotel Dieu hospital in Kingston is willing to act as an interim sponsor, if need be, and reopen the centre immediately under their supervision. Well-established and respected individuals are ready to help as well. Minister, all we need from you is the green light to proceed on this interim solution so that the clients of the centre can once again have access to their home away from home before Christmas.

ATOM EGOYAN

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): I want to take this opportunity today to pay tribute to Atom Egoan, director of the film *The Sweet Hereafter*, which I'm sure everybody in this House already is aware won triple awards, including the grand jury prize at the Cannes Film Festival in May and just recently won eight awards at the Genie Awards here in Toronto.

I'm very proud to tell the House today that it's a little-known fact that Atom lives in Riverdale here in Toronto in a humble little house on a humble little street in south Riverdale in my riding. I want, on behalf of all the members of the House, to congratulate him for the great work he's been doing here and internationally across the world. We're very proud of him. We're very proud of the

fact that he lives in Toronto and we're extremely proud that he lives in the riding of Riverdale.

1340

STRATHROY FOODS

Mr Bruce Smith (Middlesex): It's my pleasure today to share additional good news with respect to the town of Strathroy and Strathroy Foods, which is located in the county of Middlesex. Strathroy Foods is one of the region's largest vegetable processing operations and has made another major capital announcement, this time in the form of a significant expansion of its cold storage facilities. The project will reduce Strathroy Food's dependency on outside cold storage by increasing the plant's floor space by some 38,000 square feet, this representing a major capital investment for the company and the municipality.

Additional technology will be utilized, and when fully functional in May 1998, the plant productivity is expected to increase by some 50%. This is yet another example of Ontario's strengthening economy at work, and specifically the growth potential of the agrifood sector in rural Ontario.

It's also very much consistent with the Minister of Agriculture and Food's commitment to supporting rural Ontario and supporting growth opportunities in our rural communities. Strathroy Foods currently employs 85 people on a full-time basis, and with this reinvestment in capital will provide new opportunities for direct employment into our community.

As MPP for Middlesex, it's my great pleasure to congratulate the employees of Strathroy Foods and to wish them great success in the expansion of their facility in the coming months. This is very exciting news for the town, for the company and for the employees themselves.

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): Surprise, surprise, downloading in the regional municipality of Sudbury isn't revenue-neutral and never will be. The shortfall in the area towns and city speaks for itself. At the region alone, the shortfall is \$5.2 million. Councillor Doug Craig says it best when he says to make this revenue-neutral there are three things you can do: You can cut services, you can raise taxes or you can increase user fees. Councillor Peter Dow says, "So much for revenue-neutral — do you cut services, do you raise taxes or do you do a combination of both?" Valley East Mayor John Robert says the region is simply going to have to cut services. The budget chair of the region, Councillor Eldon Gainer, fears workers are going to have to be laid off, services will be cut and spending on roads, bridges, sewer and water projects will be reduced.

What's the Harris answer? The Minister of Northern Development and Mines thinks an area service board is the answer. You know what? That would replace the region. So at the end of the year and at the end of the first session of the 36th Parliament, what did Mike Harris do

for Sudbury? He caused rising taxes and decreased services, increased user fees, made a region redundant, increased tuition at Laurentian University, Cambrian College and Collège Boréal, closed our hospitals and reduced services. Thanks, Mike. Merry Christmas.

TORONTO BOARD OF EDUCATION

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): Later this afternoon, I will be attending the last meeting of the Toronto Board of Education. I want to say today that I am proud to have had the opportunity and the privilege to serve as a school trustee on the Toronto Board of Education from 1978 to 1990 and as chair of that body from 1988 to 1990. As an institution, the Toronto Board of Education has been at the forefront of progressive educational change in this province in responding to the changing needs of our students.

Long before there were ministry policies, the Toronto board had established both policies and programs in such areas as multiculturalism, women's studies, kindergarten, early childhood education, school-based child care, apprenticeship and technical education, French-language and third-language programs, and on the new basics, which include critical thinking skills, in addition to the traditional basics.

The board has also been at the forefront in encouraging parental involvement in a real way, school by school and community by community. The change that has been brought about by that institution has come about because there have been trustees willing to push the yardstick and to work with parents, to encourage parental involvement and to work with teachers and administrators to bring progressive change along.

Today it is with some pride that I reflect on that, while also acknowledging the incredible challenge that lies ahead for the new body that's going to be taking life here in Metropolitan Toronto and for the challenges that lie ahead, particularly in light of the Tory Harris cuts.

WINTER CARNIVALS

Mr Allan K. McLean (Simcoe East): Ontario is a province of many seasons. Tourism is one of our biggest industries. Small communities thrive on the investment visitors bring to our municipalities and events.

In Simcoe East, the town of Penetanguishene will be celebrating the 50th anniversary of its Winterama. In 1948, the Penetanguishene Chamber of Commerce wanted to make its town a winter playground for tourists. For city visitors, Winterama was their first experience at ice fishing, at riding a scoot over the frozen waters of Georgian Bay or at sawing a log. While these experiences were part of the daily life for residents in this rural community, they were an exciting glimpse of rural life for urban dwellers.

Over the past 50 years, other communities have adopted similar winter carnivals. In fact, the city of Orillia Winter Carnival is being held on the same weekend as the Penetanguishene Winterama, which is February 20 to 22.

The face of Winterama has changed in 50 years. Added to the events are ice sculptures, curling bonspiels, bowling tournaments, broomball and snowmobile races, just to name a few.

Winterama and the Orillia Winter Carnival are like old home week for these communities. Former residents return to celebrate the winter solstice with family and friends. In doing so, Ontario retains its rich heritage and the local communities benefit from thousands of visitors who top up the economy.

I wish everyone a merry Christmas and a happy new year.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Ms Annamarie Castrilli (Downsview): I beg leave to present a report on "The Impact of the Conservative Government's Funding Cuts on Children and Children's Services in the Province of Ontario" from the standing committee on social development.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Ms Castrilli: Yes. The committee on social development held hearings on the impact of the Conservative government's funding cuts on children and children's services in Ontario. The committee invited the widest range of service providers and experts possible to appear before it within the limited time available for hearings.

Much evidence was presented on the changing environment in which children live, and particular attention was focused on the growing problem of child poverty.

All the witnesses agreed that the current system of children's services needs to be changed for the better and presented the committee with recommendations on how to do so. The recommendations are at the end of the report and include early intervention, policy and program coordination, equality between public and private sector providers, quality early childhood education, healthy families and community spirit and cohesion.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON REGULATIONS AND PRIVATE BILLS

Mr Derwyn Shea (High Park-Swansea): I beg leave to present the first report of 1997 from the standing committee on regulations and private bills.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Mr Shea: None at this time.

SELECT COMMITTEE ON ONTARIO HYDRO NUCLEAR AFFAIRS

Mr Derwyn Shea (High Park-Swansea): I beg leave to present a report from the select committee on Ontario

Hydro nuclear affairs and move the adoption of its recommendations.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Mr Shea: I do. On behalf of the select committee, I am pleased to present to the Legislature the report of the committee regarding Ontario Hydro nuclear affairs.

The operation of nuclear generating stations is an issue of fundamental importance to the people of Ontario. Nineteen operating nuclear reactors supply approximately 60% of the electricity which is utilized by residents, commercial enterprises and industry alike. Everyone in Ontario benefits from nuclear energy.

The select committee, which has met for three months, is satisfied that the nuclear reactors are being safely operated. However, the inability to effectively manage nuclear operations has led to a serious reduction in the performance of the nuclear reactors.

The select committee agrees that the nuclear asset optimization plan should be accepted as is. Ontario Hydro should review the nuclear asset optimization plan through the business plans being prepared in early 1998. The changes should take into consideration environmental, community, financial and labour relations issues.

The committee also concludes that much more can and should be done in order to increase the margin of safety in nuclear operations and to protect Ontario's investment. The select committee's report makes several findings and recommendations on these important issues.

In conclusion, the select committee has been impressed with the expertise, diligence and assistance offered by all parties who have participated in the committee's hearings and deliberations.

I have also been impressed with the committee members representing all three parties in this Legislature who worked closely together under tight deadlines to ensure that this report was as comprehensive as possible. The fact that so much of this report received the unanimous support of all three parties is a testament to the goodwill of all the committee members.

I now move adjournment of the debate.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

1350

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

TECHNOLOGY FOR CLASSROOMS TAX CREDIT ACT, 1997

LOI DE 1997 SUR LE CRÉDIT D'IMPÔT FAVORISANT L'EMPLOI DE LA TECHNOLOGIE DANS LES SALLES DE CLASSE

Mr Hastings moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 178, An Act to amend the Education Act and the Income Tax Act to provide a tax credit for private sector

investment in classroom technology / *Projet de loi 178, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'éducation et la Loi de l'impôt sur le revenu pour créer un crédit d'impôt pour les investissements du secteur privé dans la technologie employée dans les salles de classe.*

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke-Rexdale): The bill amends the Income Tax Act to permit taxpayers to obtain an income tax credit against their income from a business or property for the amount of the undepreciated capital costs of computer property that they donate to a school board, if they acquired the property as new no earlier than the third year before the taxation year in which making the donation and the board accepts the donation.

Regulations under the act can limit the classes or types or items of computer property for which the donation gives rise to a tax credit. Under an amendment to the Education Act, a school board that receives a donation of computer property is required, to the extent reasonably possible, to use it in the classroom for the purpose of the instruction of pupils in the schools under its charge and specifically in the schools that the donor specifies in the donation, if applicable.

ORAL QUESTIONS

NORTH YORK BRANSON HOSPITAL

Mr Gerard Kennedy (York South): I have a question for the Minister of Health. Minister, earlier on in your tenure you told the public that you would go slow, that you would see an orderly transition in terms of closing hospitals. That's what you've said in the public relations you've been doing. But then there's the real world. The real world includes Branson Hospital. Branson Hospital is a hospital here in Toronto that you sent investigators into. Two days ago they came back with a report and in that report they talk about finding in Branson Hospital 20 patients at a time spending two to three days in the emergency department, serious morale problems among the medical staff and unacceptable delays in patient care in response to emergency calls. They found that several medical staff indicated they feared losing their licence to practise due to the working conditions. This is the state of a hospital in Ontario. Do you agree with your investigators that there is a crisis at Branson and will you take responsibility for it today?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health): As you know, that report you are quoting is the confidential information and property of the hospital. I would just like to indicate to you that, as I said before, we have been meeting with all of the hospitals in the province in order to ensure that at Branson and elsewhere we can make sure we have quality care for patients. That will continue to be our focus and that will continue to be our emphasis.

Mr Kennedy: The minister chooses to ignore a report that calls for immediate action. Minister, it says that unless there is immediate action, this hospital will implode, that the staff believe the hospital will collapse. You can't ignore a report that you signed the order for, that you assigned the investigators to and that tells you about conditions the board of the hospital wrote to your ministry about on April 29 and again in September and again in November.

Minister, the public of Ontario wants to know why you're ignoring the conditions you've created. The major problem at Branson is the uncertainty. The doctors and nurses don't know where they're going. You have ordered the closing of 30 hospitals and you have no plan to deal with the nurses and doctors about where they're going to practise in the province. The hospital is falling apart.

Minister, will you stand up and tell us you will take responsibility, that there will be action on Branson and that you will take ownership of the problem you've created for the people who are served by Branson hospital?

Hon Mrs Witmer: I think it's very important to stress one more time that the Ministry of Health staff, particularly the assistant deputy minister, have been meeting with those at Branson, as well as those at North York General. We understand that the two boards are going to be continuing to work together. Certainly we can ensure that top-quality patient care will continue to be provided there.

Mr Kennedy: The minister continues to dwell in a fairyland that has nothing to do with what's in this report. I'm going to send it across to the minister because it's clear she hasn't bothered to read it, even though it was presented to her, not to the hospital board, two days ago. Minister, it follows a report from investigators in Windsor that said many of the same things, that you aren't managing hospitals in this province properly, and a report from the Ivey school of business that said at 12 hospitals all kinds of problems are manifest.

People are not getting quality care. That's what the report said. You can't simply give us public relations answers here today. What will you do for the people at Branson and what, more important, will you do for the province? Will you agree to an investigation, not just of hospitals, but of your management of the hospitals and what the restructuring commission is doing to reduce patient care at Branson and at other hospitals? This report says this is a precursor for hospitals all around the province. If immediate action isn't taken, this is what can be expected at other hospitals that have been ordered to cease operations. Minister, you must respond today.

Hon Mrs Witmer: I would just indicate to you one more time that the report you have is the confidential property of the hospital. I guess I have to wonder where you obtained the copy. I would also indicate to you that we are in daily communication with the hospital. I can also indicate to you that we are taking every action we can to ensure that patient care is protected. There has been progress made. As I say, we are in daily communication and we are protecting patient care.

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich): My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs. I would like to ask you again today about another community where your dumping of costs has not been revenue-neutral, and that is the city of Sarnia.

Mayor Bradley from the city of Sarnia has already told his community that he has lost half of his staff at the municipality. They don't have the places to cut that you believe they do. You have ordered additional savings to the community of Sarnia that they simply cannot achieve without a 5.25% tax increase, or they will just lop off services wholesale.

Yesterday, when we asked you about communities, you blamed the councillors and the mayors for being mismanagers. What will you say today to the city of Sarnia, which has always been competent in its management and where your dumping of costs is not revenue-neutral? Minister, what do you say to Mayor Bradley today?

1400

Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): We're asking the city of Sarnia to come up with a 1.7% reduction in expenditures, less than two cents on every dollar. I'm quite confident —

Interjections.

Hon Mr Leach: If Sarnia is having difficulty coming to grips with trying to save 1.7% off its operating budget, I know the member for Sarnia will be meeting with the mayor early next week. I'm sure he'll be able to assist them in showing them how to achieve those savings. I don't think that less than two cents on every dollar is too much to ask in order to get the financial situation of the province back in working order, to get rid of the \$11-billion deficits that were strangling this province, to get the economy rolling again. Most municipalities are quite prepared to do that and most municipal councillors have the skills and ability to accomplish that.

The Speaker: Supplementary; member for St Catharines.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a question for the same minister. In Niagara Falls they're saying that "furious councillors across Niagara" — that's all the Niagara region — "are vowing acts of protest and defiance in their vehement opposition to the province's service swap."

"The mayor of Niagara Falls says, 'We won't be able to provide the same services. We don't deserve to be treated this way.' Regional chair Debbie Zimmerman says, 'This so-called revenue neutrality is not true. It's a huge boulder they've handed us. You can't pass it on to the taxpayer.'"

In Niagara it's \$25 million you're going to stick the people of Niagara with in additional costs. Already the municipalities have cut to the bone. They've been cutting for several years. They have to provide services to people in the Niagara region. We have one of the oldest populations per capita in all of Canada. We've experienced very difficult unemployment in our part of the province.

Minister, do you not understand that your downloading is not only not neutral but is causing great damage to Niagara? What are you going to do about that?

Hon Mr Leach: Niagara Falls, with a population of 70,000, is being asked to reduce its operating budget by 1.7%. That's less than two cents on every dollar. I'm quite confident that the elected councillors in Niagara Falls have the skills and ability to do that and I'm sure they will. If they need some assistance, if they want some provincial officials to come down and give them a hand in reviewing their budget line by line to find ways and means of coming up with that expenditure reduction without reducing services, the province would be more than pleased to send some officials in to review their budget line by line and show them where those savings can be found without cutting the levels of service.

The Speaker: Final supplementary; member for Sudbury.

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): To the same minister: We know this shuffling around of costs is simply to make your balance sheet look a lot better. That's all it is. At the end of the day Ontario municipalities are still short in excess of \$500 million.

Let's talk about the city of Brockville for a second. In the city of Brockville's case, the downloading is going to cost that municipality \$703,000. The city will have to cut spending on programs and services by that amount to offset the cost to make it revenue-neutral, or they'll have to increase taxes.

The CAO, Brian Switzer, is not sure he has the right figure. He and his treasurer, Mike Larocque, have phoned your office repeatedly, asking if public health costs and land ambulance costs are included. They do not think they are.

Will you commit to two things today, Minister? Will you commit to phoning Brian Switzer or Mike Larocque from the city of Brockville? Second, will you commit to them and to the House today that you will ensure it is revenue-neutral by putting in any additional money?

Hon Mr Leach: It's interesting that the member for Sudbury brought up a community outside of northern Ontario, probably for very good reason, because I know the minister responsible for northern affairs met with all of the mayors of northern Ontario last night and they are just delighted with the way things are going, including the member's home town of Sudbury, where the budget chief said that the ministers and the Tories did a fine job for the north.

With respect to the community that was brought up by the member, I would be more than pleased to commit to have the appropriate staff call the appropriate officials in that community and ensure that they have all the information they need. I would be pleased to commit to do that.

PENSION FUNDS

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): My question is to the Minister of Finance. Yesterday, I went to the United Food and Commercial Workers' picket line at Maple Leaf

Foods in Burlington. I was accompanied by the president of the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation, Mr Earl Manners, and a number of other —

Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East): Who?

Mr Hampton: I'm aware the Conservative caucus doesn't like the OSSTF, but I'll try to present the question anyway.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order, government members. Leader of the third party.

Mr Hampton: As I said, I went with the OSSTF president, Earl Manners, local teachers' representatives and our labour critic. They were there to express their outrage that their pension fund, the teachers' pension fund, is being used to support the management of Maple Leaf Foods. Maple Leaf Foods is demanding a \$9-an-hour reduction in wages, along with a long list of other cutbacks.

What the teachers asked for and what they're going to ask your government for is that pension legislation be changed. Will you do that? Will you change the pension legislation to give them a say in how their pension fund is invested?

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): The leader of the third party is probably aware that the Ministry of Finance, especially the financial institutions part of the ministry, is currently undergoing a review of the entire pension law situation in Ontario. We are seeking advice from all groups, including organized labour, and I'd be more than happy to take their points of view into account before we come up with a comprehensive policy.

Mr Hampton: Let me express to you what teachers expressed yesterday. They want to see their pension funds invested in ways which create better-paying jobs, in ways that create true productivity — not a cut in wages, not a cut in benefits, not fewer jobs and not a race to the bottom. That's what they're interested in seeing.

I introduced a private member's bill last year. It's called An Act to make Pension Plans accountable to Workers. It's not a radical bill. What it calls for is groups like teachers and other workers having more representation in the trustees who oversee pension funds and giving them the opportunity to give some investment direction to the administrator of the pension fund. Would you be willing to adopt that kind of legislation? That's the kind of legislation the teachers want to see in Ontario's pension laws.

Hon Mr Eves: I think the Ontario secondary school teachers' fund, and the teachers' pension plan for that matter, have done very well. They've invested in areas that do create jobs, like Maple Leaf Gardens and the Toronto Sun. They own all kinds of things which I'm sure you're aware are worth billions of dollars in Ontario.

As I said to the leader of the third party in response to his initial question, I am willing to take all points of view into account, but we're not going to develop pension law in the province bit by bit or willy-nilly; we are going to take a comprehensive look at the pension law situation in

Ontario. I've had meetings with Ross McClellan and Gord Wilson. I'm sure you're quite aware of who they are. We'll continue to consult with everybody in the community, including organized labour. I think their points of view are very helpful.

1410

Mr Hampton: I'm glad the Minister of Finance is conducting a review of pension laws, because there is one very important pension issue that faces your government immediately. You'll remember that in the mid-1980s someone named Conrad Black staged a raid upon the surplus in the pension plan of his workers at Dominion Stores. There were a couple of other employers who followed that very bad example.

Our government brought in a regulation — it's called section 8 of Ontario regulation 909 — that protects workers' pension funds from raids by employers who merely want to reach in and take out the surplus. That regulation, however, will come to an end on December 31, 1997.

You have a choice you can make right now. You can choose to protect workers' pension funds or you can choose to allow Conrad Black to resume his former behaviour. Which is it? Will you renew that regulation?

Hon Mr Eves: I'm somewhat surprised that the leader of the third party would stand in the chamber and admit today, seeing how he criticizes the government every time the government does something by regulation — now he's suggesting we make a very substantial change to public policy by regulation and admitted that his government did this quite often.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order.

Hon Mr Eves: To the leader of the third party, and the member for Beaches-Woodbine, who seems to be quite entertained by this dialogue, how do you think the regulation got there in the first place? Your government made substantial public policy change by putting it there. They put a sunset date on it. I don't know why your government would choose to do that, but you did it. As I said, we will look at the entire area of pension law and the public policy surrounding pension law as a whole, not willy-nilly, piece by piece or by regulation, like you did.

The Speaker: New question; third party.

Mr Hampton: I find it interesting that the Minister of Finance gets quite upset when we simply ask him to continue a regulation which protects workers' pension funds.

ASSISTANCE TO DISABLED STUDENTS

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): I have a question to the Minister of Education and Training: I'm going to ask you today to protect some of the students in Ontario who are in the most disadvantaged positions. We have found that post-secondary students who are deaf or hard of hearing are no longer going to be covered by the Ministry of Community and Social Services under vocational rehabilitation services. As a result of Bill 142, they're now coming over to the Ministry of Education.

Many of these students have to attend specialized private schools in the United States to get the program they need. The Ministry of Community and Social Services used to provide them with some grant funding to help them out, but now that they're coming under the Ministry of Education they will qualify only for loan funding. It means that these deaf and hearing-disabled students will have to run up bills of \$28,000 as a result of this change in policy. Will you help those students out?

Hon David Johnson (Minister of Education and Training): I will endeavour to investigate this matter. I must confess that I'm not totally aware of all the details, but I will investigate the matter and see what can be done in this particular instance.

Mr Hampton: Let me help the minister along. This is a quote from the Common Sense Revolution. It says, "Aid to seniors and the disabled will not be cut."

I have a letter from a student at the Rochester Institute of Technology, who writes: "This major cutback hurts me. It has not given me enough time to plan my future, applying for a student loan or applying to other universities in Canada. This has put my education in danger. My future is on hold because of the government cutback. I was told that the decision may happen some time in the spring, but that does not prepare me to continue my education at the Rochester Institute of Technology."

The question is very simple: Are you going to totally wipe out the grants that these deaf and hearing-disabled students used to receive? Under Bill 142 they don't receive it and under the Ministry of Education they aren't going to receive it. What are you going to do?

Hon David Johnson: I'm going to refer it to the Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Community and Social Services): I apologize to the leader of the third party that I didn't hear the first part of his question. As he probably will be aware, we are replacing the current system because of the flaws and difficulties it has in terms of supporting people with disabilities, not only in income or employment support but also in the education supports they might well need. That is being replaced with the new Ontario disability support plan. We are well aware of the fact that timing, for many individuals, is very crucial, and we want to ensure that people have the opportunities they need to get the higher education they would like to receive so they can be financially independent.

Mr Hampton: No matter how the government tries to confuse the issue, the nub of it is this: These students used to receive counselling, education grants and other assistance from the vocational rehabilitation service branch of the Ministry of Community and Social Services. Bill 142 essentially wipes out the vocational rehabilitation service and wipes out the services these students used to receive and also wipes out the grants they used to receive. They are now being told they should apply to the Ministry of Education and Training. But OSAP simply says, "We do not provide grants; we provide loans."

You've essentially taken \$28,000 away from these students in terms of completing their education, and you're going to put them \$28,000 in debt. This is clearly set out

in Bill 142. I'm asking the government, what are you going to do? You said you were not going to cut disabled people, you were not going to cut people who have a tougher time, but clearly you have.

Hon Mrs Ecker: No, we are not asking them to go into debt. I really wish the honourable member had paid attention when we were outlining some of the objectives of our policy. One of the problems with the Vocational Rehabilitation Services Act and the services and programs that existed was that in order to get any services, a person with a disability had to have mandatory counselling, whether they needed it or wanted it. That's not fair to them. That was one of the things they asked us to change. Of course the old program will no longer exist, because it's going to be replaced by a new program that has been designed over the last year in careful consultation with people with disabilities so that they can get the support they need.

IPPERWASH PROVINCIAL PARK

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): My question is to the Premier, and it's on Ipperwash. We've been trying to get to the bottom of this situation at Ipperwash for some time. On August 22, we requested information under freedom of information. Since then, it appears to us that someone has coordinated a deliberate attempt to keep the information from us. We'd like to know what is happening. It took until October 24 to get a response, and then, coincidentally, all five ministries responded on the same day. They asked for \$1,215 to proceed. We got the money. They then responded to us on December 5 that we would get another answer — surprise, surprise — on December 22.

My question to you, Premier, is, can you assure the public and the House that no one on your staff is coordinating the responses to these freedom of information requests?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I have no idea if these are order paper questions or if these are freedom of information requests. I have no idea who does that.

Mr Phillips: Then I would appreciate your investigating, because you refused even to commit to holding a public inquiry on Ipperwash. We now are trying to get information on what happened there. We have followed the process, we have given written requests for it, we've given the money for the information and we, at every step, are being delayed. I ask this simple request of you, Mr Premier. Because you don't know the answer, will you undertake to get an answer to my question? Will you ask your staff today whether anyone on your personal staff is responsible for coordinating the responses to our freedom of information request?

Hon Mr Harris: Sure.

1420

CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): My question is to the minister responsible for children's issues. I'd

like to take this opportunity to congratulate her on her appointment to cabinet.

Minister, about a month ago you stood in this House and you made your first statement in honour of National Child Day. I'm asking you questions today, when we've received in the Legislature the report on the impact of the conservative government's funding cuts on children and children's services in the province of Ontario. At the time you made your statement, you said your job was in part to coordinate across different ministries and, I guess, bring together a focus on funding of services for children. If you listen to the radio this week, you will hear an ad from front-line child care workers and children's aid workers with an urgent message saying that if you really want to make a priority for children in your government, you must fund abuse prevention programs. We have had reports from inquests, we've had reports from interfaith coalitions —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Question, please.

Ms Lankin: — we've had others say, "You've got to increase funding across ministries in areas like housing, child care, abuse prevention." Minister, are you taking this message to cabinet? Are you asking —

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Hon Margaret Marland (Minister without Portfolio [children's issues]): Actually, some of the aspects you've mentioned I don't need to take to cabinet because the cabinet has already made decisions on programs that are helping in those areas. One of the programs that is starting in January 1998, the Healthy Babies, Healthy Children program, will deal with some of the concerns you've expressed. Our government actually is ahead on some of the recommendations in those areas of concern.

Ms Lankin: Minister, after a month I hoped you would have a clear picture of what is happening to children in this province.

I want you, for a moment, to imagine counting to 1,000 with me. One, two, three — think how long it would take to get to 1,000. Now picture a different child's face every time you count to 1,000. That's the number of children who are now in Metro shelters and hostels. A year ago, it was just over 700 people, parents, kids — all total. Now there are 1,000 children — just children, not counting their parents. Some of your government's cuts have contributed to putting those kids there. Some of the cuts in social assistance have made people lose their homes and they're out into shelter. Reverend David Pfrimmer of the Lutheran church, who's chair of the Interfaith Social Assistance Reform Coalition said recently, "Governments are walking away from their responsibilities in providing for people in need."

Minister, we need you to live up to your responsibility, your personal responsibility to children.

The Speaker: Question, please.

Ms Lankin: You must go to cabinet and ask for an increase in funding for public housing, social housing and public health visiting. You are responsible for those kids —

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Hon Mrs Marland: I'm going to refer it to the minister for women's issues.

Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for women's issues): In response to the referral from my colleague, I think the members of this Legislative Assembly are very much aware of the reinvestments of this government in programs to assist children, especially in the area of counselling programs for children in our schools. We know already that the teachers and nurses and physicians are referring to our school boards so that young people can get help, along with their parents, counselling programs for children who have witnessed abuse.

With regard to the Ministry of Community and Social Services, I'll just read about what's happening right now, and right across the ministries. School-based services provide up to \$9,000 per school board for young people, and these are new programs, reinvestment programs for kids. The Minister of Community and Social Services has over 1,000 programs for mothers and children across this province. Some of them are new and reinvestment.

The Speaker: Answer, please.

Hon Mrs Cunningham: Right now, as we move on into the next season, our priority is for families, especially for children who are —

The Speaker: New question.

Mr Ted Arnott (Wellington): My question today is for the minister responsible for children's issues. As you know, I had a resolution before the House this morning to highlight the Healthy Babies, Healthy Children initiatives, and because government business superseded it this morning we were unable to debate it. Considering the importance the government has placed on children through the appointment of a minister for children, I would like to ask the minister whether our government will consider enhancing our new program, Healthy Babies, Healthy Children.

Hon Mrs Marland: I'd like to thank my colleague from Wellington for the question. Actually, I think this is a very exciting initiative in Ontario when we talk about the Healthy Babies, Healthy Children program. This program is one of the most comprehensive methods of providing early intervention and prevention to families in this province. In fact, each and every family with a newborn in Ontario will be screened at birth for risk of poor child development and parenting difficulties. With the development and distribution of screening and assessment tools now completed, we estimate that 90% of the programs will be operational in January 1998. As Healthy Babies, Healthy Children is implemented across the province, the local boards of health will monitor the outcomes and evaluate the effectiveness of the program, something that has never been done before in this province.

Mr Arnott: I'm for enhancement of these services in the province because I've recognized the need for this type of program in Wellington, the riding I'm so privileged to represent. It has been proven beyond question that a

positive investment now in early intervention and prevention will result in savings in the future for these children. Minister, can you inform the House of other initiatives the government has undertaken in the areas of early intervention and prevention.

Hon Mrs Marland: I am proud to tell you that our government has made some substantial investments in the future of our children. We have demonstrated our commitment to early intervention and prevention.

Interjections.

Hon Mrs Marland: Mr Speaker, it's hard to understand why there is the kind of response from the opposition that we have, because one of the things our government has done, as a matter of fact, is added an ongoing commitment to a program which the previous government established. Surely that is something you would want us to do.

We have added \$5 million to reach over 5,000 high-risk families through the Better Beginnings, Better Futures program. We're not so narrow in our scope that we don't recognize an existing program started by another government. We believe in that program and we're continuing to support it.

The Speaker: Answer, please.

Hon Mrs Marland: Obviously, through all the programs we are continuing to fund, plus the programs we've initiated, our government has —

The Speaker: Thank you.

1430

HIGHWAY 407

Mr Mike Colle (Oakwood): My question is for the Minister of Transportation. As you know, a lot of motorists are afraid to use Highway 407 and ridership has dropped off dramatically. Perhaps one of the reasons this is taking place is that you have all these hidden service charges. For instance, a person who takes a 15-cent ride between Bayview and Leslie on the 407 ends up with a bill for \$3.45. Will you take steps to stop the gouging and make sure that these hidden service charges are removed on the 407 as quickly as possible so you can get people to use it again?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Transportation): It's always nice to hear from the honourable member and I thank him for the question.

First of all, let me take issue, however, with his contention that ridership on the 407 is somehow disappointing. I would say to the honourable member that we are averaging over 106,000 trips per day. Maybe the opposition doesn't want to hear that.

The original projections for the 407 were going to start off at 55,000 trips per day and they weren't even going to get to 100,000 trips per day until the end of the first year of tolling. So we are one year ahead of schedule. There are over 100,000 transponders out there. I would call that a big success, and I encourage him to do the same thing.

Mr Colle: Obviously, the minister doesn't want to deal with the issue of these hidden service charges. The minister doesn't want to talk about the gouging. It amounts to

highway robbery, loan sharking, whatever you want to call it.

I've got another invoice. The invoice says that this person went from Highway 410, which you know well, to Highway 400. The toll charge was \$1.38. The bill was for \$4.68, a 300% gouge for that short trip.

The point is, do you believe in this gouging, should it continue, and are you going to take steps to stop the gouging? That's what you've got to talk about, the gouging.

Hon Mr Clement: I would be quite happy to introduce the honourable member at this time to the concept of cost recovery. That concept is a very important concept for the 407. The people who use the highway pay for the highway. They pay the full cost so that other taxpayers who are not using the highway don't pay for the highway. That is how the 407 is going to be a success for commuters in the GTA, and it will not be on the backs of the taxpayers in North Bay or the taxpayers in Timmins or the taxpayers in Windsor. We are proud of that.

CHARITABLE GAMING

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): My question is for the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations. I believe he's been holding his breath on this one, because it's about the charity casinos and the backroom deals he's been doing.

We've been talking to people in northern Ontario; obviously, so has the minister. In September, Minister, you announced the eight successful bidders for charity casinos. Isn't it a coincidence that those who give also get? I'd like to know what the minister who hands out the money bags to the charity casino operators was doing playing golf with Fraser Dougall, one of the bidders for the casino contracts, before the bids were decided.

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations): The short answer is, playing golf.

Interjections.

Hon Noble Villeneuve (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, minister responsible for francophone affairs): Wasn't Dwight Duncan there, too?

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order, members, Minister of Agriculture.

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: We actually chatted about this on Studio 2 the other night, earlier this week. The procedure we had in place for the whole RFP process for the charity gaming clubs — we chose a process that was independent, arm's-length and transparent.

The committee that was selecting and evaluating the bids consisted of representatives from the Gaming Control Commission, the Attorney General's counsel, OPP and outside experts, including a couple of independent CA firms.

My office did not have any information; we had no contact with the organization; we had no input into the selection. That was the whole idea behind this. Also, even if a conversation had come up, which it did not, because otherwise he would have been disqualified on the spot, if

it did it would make no difference because we had no input in the selection.

Mr Martin: Chatting on Studio 2 just does not cut it. The minister knows that his gambling strategy stinks big-time. Mr Dougall and his companies have made donations to the PC Party over the last few years.

The minister has fluffed answers to questions about conflict of interest, but there's too much going on behind closed doors. The minister sooner or later has to answer for it, and today would be a good day. It's an issue of public confidence, especially in the area of casinos. You have to be above suspicion and you have to be seen to be above suspicion. Whatever your claims, in the eyes of the public this stinks. It reeks of old-style politics.

Will the minister halt the process with this contract and initiate full public review of the tendering process for the charity casinos?

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: I could repeat what I just said about its being a transparent, arm's-length approach. I am being encouraged to repeat that so perhaps the member can understand. But what I might say to the member instead is that I invite you to make those remarks outside this House and see exactly what the reaction will be from some of the proponents. I suggest that you make sure that you are accusing people on facts based on something, rather than just —

Interjections.

Mr Martin: On a point of personal privilege, Mr Speaker: I believe I have been threatened in this House. We will be putting out a statement on this issue that the press will get, and they will be able to ask their own questions.

The Speaker: All right. I don't see that as a point of privilege.

Minister?

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: In fact, Mr Dougall was interviewed on CBC — this is an old story; probably about a couple of months ago he was interviewed — in which he said, "No, there was no conversation on charity gaming clubs that came up." Had there been, he would have been disqualified on the spot. Once again, even if it happened, which it didn't, my office had absolutely no input in the selection process. It's idiotic to even suggest so.

1440

BEAR HUNTING

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke-Rexdale): My question is directed at the Minister of Natural Resources. Over the past few months there have been many petitions presented by various members of all three political parties dealing with a proposed ban on the spring black bear hunt. I would like to know what the ministry is doing when you look at the other side of the issue in terms of petitions being presented by members from all three parties advocating no ban. What is the Ministry of Natural Resources planning, or what are its intentions, dealing with getting a better understanding of what the actual count of the black bear population is throughout this province?

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Natural Resources): I want to thank the member for Etobicoke-Rexdale for the question. Of course, the bear population, the number of black bears in Ontario, is both important and, as I'm sure the member will realize, very difficult to measure accurately.

The measurements made by the ministry now are based in part on a study that was done between 1969 and 1983 in the Great Lakes-St Lawrence forest. Using scientific methods, within a margin of error, the ministry can determine how many black bears exist in Ontario. There is a second study that's been under way since 1989 that will be concluded in 1999. Using those studies, and a set of annual calculations, including a number of factors, including the monitoring of the harvest on an annual basis, the Ministry of Natural Resources is able to estimate the population of black bears at a very healthy number — between 75,000 and 100,000.

Mr Hastings: My supplementary question deals with whether those data collection methodologies and the studies suffice to create an effective, strategic policy for the management of this vital resource in Ontario for all its citizens. Can the ministry come up with a good black bear management policy so we really can deal with this issue in an effective way?

Hon Mr Snobelen: I believe this is an issue the ministry has turned a lot of its attention to, as have many members of this House from all three parties. Of course, conservation is at the heart of the matter and it's very important we have the proper management tools in place.

One of the things that has happened in the ministry recently, as I'm sure the member is aware, is that under the stewardship of the former minister, Chris Hodgson, the ministry was able to put a special purpose account together where the revenues from hunting and fishing licences across the province now go directly into a fund to help us monitor fish and wildlife conservation. Those fees come from hunting and fishing licences.

In Bill 139, which has been tabled today and which I hope the members will finish considering today, there are several measures that specifically address issues of black bear, including making it unlawful to interfere with a bear den and a complete prohibition on the sale of bear parts. These are two of the issues that have been brought to the fore by many people in the province and are addressed in Bill 139.

EDUCATION FINANCING

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William): My question is to the Minister of Education. The year 1997 has been a very successful year for a government that wanted to create sheer chaos in education. The Harris government's first act of 1997 was to announce it would take control of education funding, which we all knew was the first step towards taking another billion dollars out of the education system and taking as many as 10,000 teachers out of our classrooms. It's almost a year later. This government has its control but it still hasn't the courage to show us what

their funding will be. What they have done is to destroy effective local governance, create mega school boards that will have no role and ensure there will be thousands fewer teachers in our classrooms next year.

We know that 1998 promises more to come from this government: more cuts to the classroom, more gutting of junior kindergarten and special education. We just don't know what. Minister, why are you delaying telling us what you plan to do to educational funding next year?

Hon David Johnson (Minister of Education and Training): First of all, I will say once again that the amount of money spent on all aspects of elementary and secondary school education in Ontario in 1997 — \$14.4 billion on all aspects of funding — is the most ever in the history of the province of Ontario. Those are the kinds of cuts that I guess the member opposite is alluding to.

Second, I will say what I've said before, that we are fine-tuning the formula, the stub-year funding formula. That's the formula which will be put out in the very near future. Even yesterday I met with representatives from various school boards to ensure that there is a fairness and an equity for all the children across Ontario, that those moneys will be released in the very near future.

Mrs McLeod: It's absolutely unacceptable that this government would take total control of education and education funding and would be standing here today on December 18 still refusing to tell anyone what their funding is actually going to be. These new boards are going to begin January 1 having to make tough decisions. The Peterborough board, for example, has been told by its local education improvement committee that they are going to have to review junior kindergarten and special education and adult education with a view to having to cut those programs. Yet to make those decisions they don't know what cuts your funding is going to force them to make.

Minister, tomorrow you are expected to announce finally the new role for school trustees, 11 months after you amalgamated the boards, a month after the new trustees were elected. We cannot wait that length of time to know what your funding is going to be. Will you, before the end of this month, at least tell the new school boards what their actual funding will be from January 1 to September 1? They are worried that stable funding means revenue-neutral in your mind and they are afraid that it's not stable at all. Will you tell them what it is?

Hon David Johnson: First of all, to correct a fact, tomorrow the Education Improvement Commission will be announcing certain recommendations with regard to the role of the trustees. This is the report of the EIC, an arm's-length body of the province of Ontario. The government will certainly take the recommendations of the EIC under consideration.

With regard to the stub-year funding, we've said all along — the previous minister said it and I've said it — that there will be stable funding for the school boards. There are various aspects that have to be considered. Yesterday the third party raised the prospect of junior kindergarten enrolment changes. These have to be looked

at board by board to ensure there is a fairness with regard to each of the boards. Even as late as yesterday, some of the boards were coming to me with various aspects of the stub-year funding they would like to see incorporated. We're looking into all that. We're going to ensure it's fair and equitable and it will be released in plenty of time for their financing for next year.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): New question, the member for Algoma.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): The minister said "in plenty of time." It's only two weeks.

Mr David Caplan (Orillia): Less than two weeks.

Mr Wildman: Less than two weeks.

WAWA ECONOMY

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I have a question to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines in regard to the serious economic disruption facing the community of Wawa as a result of the decision of Algoma Steel Inc to shut down the Algoma Ore division operation there. I understand there's a meeting tomorrow of officials involving his ministry, the township, the company and others to talk about the establishment of an industrial adjustment committee. Could the minister please inform the House what contribution his government is prepared to make to such a committee and what he expects from the federal government and the company?

Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Northern Development and Mines): I appreciate the member of the third party's question. As he's well aware, our government is concerned about this situation, as we are for all communities that are facing economic challenges. It's not unexpected that this mine was going to close. I believe when he was minister it was forecast when they did the restructuring of the parent company in the Sault. But nevertheless it still presents a hardship for the community.

As he's well aware, and we've talked about this in the past, staff was present at a meeting when I met with the local mayor and their economic development officer. We agreed at that time to set up a committee to look for solutions, to try to improve the economic situation in Wawa. To fund this task force, to start up, the government of Ontario committed some dollars that I understand will be matched by the federal government, and the company is coming to the table as well. I look forward to hearing the results of their meeting that we agreed would be held. It will be the first of a series that I hope can look for solutions for the long-term health of Wawa and all the residents.

1450

Mr Wildman: I appreciate the minister's response. This is a serious situation and I know he recognizes that. I would hope, though, that the minister would be able to inform the House of what sorts of preliminary, recognizing they are preliminary, discussions he has had with his federal counterpart and with the seniors officials of the

company with regard to their willingness to come to the table as he said he hopes they will do.

Hon Mr Hodgson: As the member knows — we've talked about this in the past — it's your riding and I appreciate your concern. I want to tell you that it's shared by the government, it's shared by the ministry staff of northern development and mines. He knows that I've personally talked to the president of the company. He knows that I've assigned an assistant deputy minister to this file and that I met with the town on pretty short notice — I think it was about 12 hours — when we had a good meeting in Sudbury on this issue. I don't think he can complain —

Mr Wildman: It was in Sault Ste Marie.

Hon Mr Hodgson: Excuse me — I know it's his riding — Sault Ste Marie. It is a serious situation and I think our ministry has shown a great deal of interest around the urgency to get this process under way to try to diversify the economy so it's not as severe an impact as it could be. I think you'd have to agree that you've had excellent service from the Ministry of Northern Development and the Mike Harris government.

POST-TEACHERS'-STRIKE COMPENSATION

Mr Douglas B. Ford (Etobicoke-Humber): My question is for the Minister of Labour. Earlier this month this chamber passed legislation which will allow working parents of Ontario to be compensated for their out-of-pocket expenses during the two-week period in November, when teachers refused to perform their responsibilities. Since then, the Etobicoke board of education has told parents in my riding that it will not accept applications for reimbursements, according to the parents who arrive at the board office and my office. They are told to leave the premises and submit the application to their local school, which in turn will send it to the board office where it was refused in the first place. The same story is told to parents who phone the board. In fact, when a parent asked a board representative if they could be assured reimbursement by dropping the application off at the school, the reply was, "I guess, if we're going to."

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Question, please.

Mr Ford: Regularly now I'm hearing from angry parents who are upset with such contempt from the school board. For too long this attitude —

The Speaker: Minister?

Mr Ford: — has plagued an eroding system —

The Speaker: Member for Etobicoke-Humber, it's over. Minister?

Hon Jim Flaherty (Minister of Labour): I thank the member for Etobicoke-Humber for the question. As promised, we have taken steps to address the inconvenience caused and the burdens shouldered by parents and guardians in Ontario as a result of the strike by teachers' unions. I would remind members and boards of education that the reason this compensation is being paid is that this

was a work interruption, a strike outside of the collective bargaining process. In fact, within the legal collective bargaining process, the number of work stoppages in Ontario is far lower on an annual basis than during the lost decade of the two previous governments.

Within the collective bargaining process, 94.9% of the collective agreements in Ontario this year — that's right, 94.9% — have been resolved without work interruption, whether by strike or by lockout.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. The member for Riverdale is seeking unanimous consent for a supplementary for the member for Etobicoke-Humber. Agreed? Agreed.

Mr Ford: When I was elected by the people in Etobicoke to bring prosperity back to Ontario and make their community a better place to live, I never thought a school board would stand in the way of hardworking taxpayers with such disrespect. I know your remarks, Minister, will be welcome news to parents in Etobicoke. Those in my riding who have experienced the same treatment by the Metropolitan Separate School Board will also appreciate the information.

Further to your remarks, I was disturbed to read today in the Ottawa Citizen that the Ontario Public School Teachers' Association is advising its members to seek reimbursement. Can you clarify for me and my constituents who is eligible to apply?

Hon Mr Flaherty: I thank again the member for Etobicoke-Humber for the question. I was surprised also to read this report in the Ottawa Citizen, which is attributed to certain leaders of the teachers' union. It reflects a misunderstanding of the reason for the legislation. Again, this was not a strike within the legal collective bargaining process in Ontario. Within that legal collective bargaining process, we have a 94.9% success rate in the province for those who bargain within the legal collective bargaining process.

I would remind school boards of their obligation under the legislation, passed by this House, that any application may be submitted directly to a school board; and further, of their statutory obligation to receive the application, if it's received by the prescribed deadline, and pay the amount claimed after they verify eligibility. I am sure that all members of this House would expect all teachers, who serve as role models for our children, to respect and obey the law.

PETITIONS

PAY EQUITY

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William): I have a petition signed by several hundred constituents relating to a matter which becomes urgent as of January 1: the ability of the Red Cross to continue to provide homemaker services. I want to present this petition in the hope that it can still

provoke some urgent response on the part of government and all three parties.

CHIROPRACTIC HEALTH CARE

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): It's my pleasure to present a petition on behalf of the member for Scarborough Centre. The petition is from Dr Gerard Arbour, a chiropractor whose practice is on Kingston Road in Scarborough.

I meet and have talked with many chiropractors in my riding of Durham East, Dr Paul Herron and Dr Dianne Lott. I am pleased to present this petition to the Parliament of Ontario:

"To Premier Mike Harris, Health Minister Elizabeth Witmer and members of the Ontario Legislature:

"Whereas the Ministry of Health has recently strengthened its reputation as the Ministry of Medicine through its \$1.7-billion" —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): You can't do a preamble and then read your petition. You do one or the other. You've done your preamble, so now you can't read your petition.

CERTIFIED GENERAL ACCOUNTANTS

Mr Gilles E. Morin (Carleton East): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas it is in the best interests of the public to have open market competition among professional accountants; and

"Whereas, under the Public Accountancy Act, only chartered accountants have full access to public accounting licences in the province of Ontario" — and the petition goes on and ends —

"We, the undersigned residents of the province of Ontario, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to grant to the Certified General Accountants Association of Ontario their request for overdue amendments to the Public Accountancy Act to allow certified general accountants full access to public practice licences and to eliminate the present monopoly."

CHILD CARE

Mr Bill Murdoch (Grey-Owen Sound): I have a petition to the Legislature of Ontario.

"We, the undersigned residents of Ontario, draw the attention of the Legislature of Ontario to the following:

"That managing the family home and caring for infants and preschool children is an honourable profession which has not been recognized for its value to our society and deserves respect and support;

"That child care policies and funding should provide equity and fairness to all Ontario families;

"Therefore, your petitioners call upon the Legislature,

"(a) to pursue policy and funding initiatives that will support a full range of child care choices, such as extend-

ing the child care tax credit to all families, including those providing full-time parental care; and

"(b) to pursue discussions with the federal government to review the tax system to find ways to assist two-parent families where one parent chooses to remain at home."

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): I forgot during the routine proceedings to announce to the House that today is the last day for our pages, obviously, and I wanted to thank them for their diligence and hard work and wish them the best in their future. Thank you very much.

1500

CERTIFIED GENERAL ACCOUNTANTS

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough North): I have a petition that has a very extensive preamble here, but it says:

"We, the undersigned residents of the province of Ontario, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to grant the Certified General Accountants Association of Ontario their request for overdue amendments to the Public Accountancy Act to allow certified general accountants full access to public practice licences and to eliminate the present monopoly."

I have put my signature to that.

TVONTARIO

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): I have petitions. One is from Cat Lake and one is from Red Lake and Ear Falls. These concern TVOntario.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas TVOntario provides Ontarians of all ages with programming that broadens understanding and responds to specific learning needs;

"Whereas TVOntario does this through formal and informal educational programming on its two networks, TVO and TFO, which are available to 97% of households; and

"Whereas these unique services include the provision of programming television time for Wawatay television programs offered in the native language;

"Whereas Wawatay radio and Wahsa distance education are delivered to first nation residents in partnership with the satellite signal of TVOntario and TFO into remote, isolated Nishnawbe-Aski Nation communities;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to stop the privatization of TVOntario."

This is signed by over 200 residents and I affix my signature as well.

COURT DECISION

Mr Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): There must be strange things done in the midnight sun, as I have a petition that reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Court of Appeal has ruled in favour of the lawful right to go topless in public; and

"Whereas the Liberal government of Canada has the legislative authority to restrict going topless in public places; and

"Whereas sections 173 and 174 of the Criminal Code relating to public nudity be clarified to provide better protection of community standards;

"We, the undersigned, respectfully petition the province of Ontario to continue to urge the government of Canada to clarify legislation on going topless in public places."

I affix my signature.

EDUCATION FINANCING

Ms Annamarie Castrilli (Downsview): I have a petition to Premier Mike Harris, Minister Dave Johnson and members of the Ontario Legislature.

"Whereas education is our future; and

"Whereas the cuts in funding expected under Bill 160 will result in fewer qualified teachers, fewer resources and programs, unqualified teachers in the classrooms, larger classes, which will necessarily lower the present excellent quality of Ontario education;

"Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly to withdraw Bill 160 immediately."

I'm in full agreement with this petition and I sign it.

COURT DECISION

Mrs Brenda Elliott (Guelph): I have a petition that reads identically to the petition just read by my colleague from Oshawa. I will complete it by saying:

"We, the undersigned, respectfully petition the province of Ontario to continue to urge the government of Canada to clarify legislation on going topless in public places."

I present this on behalf of 26 of my constituents and sign it on their behalf.

RÉFORME DU SYSTÈME D'ÉDUCATION

M. Jean-Marc Lalonde (Prescott et Russell) : J'ai ici une pétition qui est signée par des citoyens de Rockland, Casselman et Vanier.

«À l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario :»

«Attendu que nous, les signataires de cette pétition, voulons signifier au gouvernement notre opposition au projet de loi 160 ;

«Attendu que le projet de loi 160 exclut les parents et les enseignants du processus de décision dans le secteur de l'éducation en Ontario ;

«Attendu que le projet de loi 160 centralise tous les pouvoirs entre les mains du gouvernement ;

«Attendu que le projet de loi 160 accorde au gouvernement Harris le pouvoir de retrancher 660 \$ millions de plus du secteur de l'éducation ;

«Nous, les soussignataires, demandons le retrait du projet de loi 160.»

J'y ajoute ma signature.

ABORTION

Mr Bruce Smith (Middlesex): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Ontario health system is overburdened and unnecessary spending must be cut; and

"Whereas pregnancy is not a disease, injury or illness and abortions are not therapeutic procedures; and

"Whereas the vast majority of abortions are done for reasons of convenience or finance; and

"Whereas the province has exclusive authority to determine what service will be insured; and

"Whereas the Canada Health Act does not require funding for elective procedures; and

"Whereas there is mounting evidence that abortion is in fact hazardous to women's health; and

"Whereas Ontario taxpayers funded over 45,000 abortions in 1993 at an estimated cost of \$25 million;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to cease from providing any taxpayer dollars for the performance of abortions."

BEAR HUNTING

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Then Member for St Catharines.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): Thank you kindly, Mr Speaker, and a good Speaker you are. I've been asked to present a petition to end the spring bear hunt. It reads as follows:

"To the Parliament of Ontario:

"Whereas bears are hunted in the spring after they have come out of hibernation; and

"Whereas about 30% of the bears killed in the spring are females, some with cubs; and

"Whereas 80% of the orphaned cubs do not survive the first year; and

"Whereas 95.3% of bears killed by non-resident hunters and 54% killed by resident hunters are killed over bait; and

"Whereas Ontario still allows the limited use of dogs in bear hunting; and

"Whereas bears are the only large mammals hunted in the spring; and

"Whereas bears are the only mammals that are hunted over bait; and

"Whereas there are only six states in the United States which still allow a spring hunt;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to amend the Game and Fish Act to prohibit the hunting of bears in the spring and to prohibit the use of baiting and dogs in all bear hunting activities."

FIRE IN HAMILTON

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I have a petition regarding Hamilton's ongoing call for a public inquiry into the Plastimet fire.

"Whereas a fire at a PVC plastic vinyl plant located in the middle of one of Hamilton's residential areas burned for three days; and

"Whereas the city of Hamilton declared a state of emergency and called for a limited voluntary evacuation of several blocks around the site; and

"Whereas the burning of PVC results in the formation and release of toxic substances such as dioxins, as well as large quantities of heavy metals and other dangerous chemicals;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to hold a full public inquiry into the Hamilton Plastimet fire."

I continue to support my citizens in this call.

EDUCATION REFORM AND ABORTION

Mr Ted Arnott (Wellington): Because it's the last day, I have a number of petitions I wish to present at this time for and against bill 160. I have a petition which is opposed to the provision of taxpayers' dollars for the performance of abortions. I would like to present these to the table at this time.

CASINO GAMBLING

Mr Mike Colle (Oakwood): I've got a petition here against the spread of casino gambling.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas during the last election campaign Mike Harris and the Tories said they would not force casinos into communities across Ontario without the consent of the voters; and

"Whereas over 70% of Metro Toronto voters in the recent municipal election voted a resounding No to the spread of casinos into their neighbourhoods; and

"Whereas the voters of the Toronto megacity have spoken loud and clear against casinos in all of Metro's former six municipalities, with over 460,000 voters saying No to Mike Harris's gambling halls into neighbourhoods; and

"Whereas there is already too much gambling in Ontario that preys upon the most vulnerable and desperate;

"Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly that Mike Harris listen to those who voted overwhelmingly No to the spread of casinos and stop the introduction of Mike Harris's gambling halls in every neighbourhood in Metro."

I'll affix my name to it.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I have further petitions signed by members of the United Food and Commercial Workers. It was forwarded to me by Dave Killam on behalf of the 80,000 UFCW members in this province.

"Whereas approximately 300 workers are killed on the job each year and 400,000 suffer work-related injuries and illnesses; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario continues to allow a massive erosion of WCB prevention funding; and

"Whereas Ontario workers are fearful that the government of Ontario, through its recent initiatives, is threatening to dismantle workers' clinics and the Workers' Health and Safety Centre; and

"Whereas the workers' clinics and the Workers' Health and Safety Centre have consistently provided a meaningful role for labour within the health and safety prevention system; and

"Whereas the workers' clinics and the Workers' Health and Safety Centre have proven to be the most cost-effective prevention organizations funded by the WCB;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately cease the assault on the workers' clinics and the Workers' Health and Safety Centre; and

"Further we, the undersigned, call upon the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to ensure that the workers' clinics and the Workers' Health and Safety Centre remain labour-driven organizations with full and equitable WCB funding and that the WCB provide adequate prevention funding to eliminate workplace illness and injury."

On behalf of my NDP colleagues, we continue to support these petitioners.

1510

CHIROPRACTIC HEALTH CARE

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): I have a petition to Premier Harris, Health Minister Elizabeth Witmer and members of the Ontario Legislature:

"Whereas the Ministry of Health has recently strengthened its reputation as the Ministry of Medicine through its \$1.7-billion, three-year agreement with the OMA; and

"Whereas the Harris government is restricting access to alternative cost saving treatments for patients of the province; and

"Whereas two recent reports commissioned by the Ministry of Health called for increased OHIP funding to improve patient access to chiropractic services on the grounds of safety, effectiveness and cost-effectiveness; and

"Whereas over one million Ontario adults now use chiropractic services annually, increasingly those with higher incomes, because of the high cost barrier caused by government underfunding; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government has shown blatant disregard for the needs of the citizens of Ontario in restricting funding for chiropractic services;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to recognize the contribution made by chiropractors to the good health of the people of Ontario, to recognize the taxpayer dollars saved by the use of low-cost preventive care such as that provided by

chiropractors, and to recognize that to restrict funding for chiropractic health care only serves to limit access to a needed health care service."

I'm pleased to present this on behalf of Dan Newman, Dr Paul Herron, Dr Dianne Lott and Dr Bruce Elliott.

EDUCATION REFORM

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): I too have about 10 different petitions here dealing with Bill 160. All of them are against it. I will just read one of them and then file them with the table. It's a petition of non-confidence.

"Whereas the government of Ontario has not listened to the public on Bill 160; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario has chosen to overtly deceive the people of Ontario as to the true objectives of Bill 160; and

"Whereas we, the people, believe that no government has a mandate to act in isolation of the wishes of the electorate of this province and we have lost confidence in this government,

"We, the undersigned electors of Ontario, petition the Lieutenant Governor to dissolve the Legislature and call a general election forthwith."

Since the Lieutenant Governor is going to be here at 5:30, maybe she can act upon this.

RÉFORME DU SYSTÈME D'ÉDUCATION

M. Gilles Bisson (Cochrane-Sud): I'd like to sign that previous petition, but I have a new petition, une pétition faisant affaire avec le projet de loi 160. C'est la dernière pétition de l'année et elle se lit comme suit :

«Attendu que l'éducation de nos enfants nous est prioritaire ;

«Attendu que nous trouvons que le système d'éducation public tel qu'il existe répond aux besoins du plus grand nombre d'élèves possible, y inclus ceux qui ont des besoins particuliers ;

«Attendu que les changements proposés par le ministre Snobelen dans le projet de loi 160 élimineront la possibilité d'action locale pour répondre aux besoins spécifiques de nos élèves ;

«Attendu que ces changements vont affecter la salle de classe de façon négative en diminuant les ressources disponibles aux enseignantes et aux enseignants ;

«Il est résolu que le ministre Snobelen — à cette heure M. Johnson — retire le projet de loi 160 et entame des discussions sérieuses avec la FEO et ses filiales afin de répondre aux inquiétudes de toutes les parties.»

Je signe cette pétition.

ORDERS OF THE DAY**FISH AND WILDLIFE
CONSERVATION ACT, 1997****LOI DE 1997
SUR LA PROTECTION DU POISSON
ET DE LA FAUNE**

Resuming the adjourned debate on third reading of Bill 139, An Act to promote the conservation of fish and wildlife through the revision of the Game and Fish Act / *Projet de loi 139, Loi visant à promouvoir la protection du poisson et de la faune en révisant la Loi sur la chasse et la pêche.*

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Further debate?

Mr Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): There are a number of issues I'd like to bring up. I'd first of all like to thank you for the opportunity to speak on this bill.

Earlier on we heard debate from a number of members where they had mentioned such happenings as what has taken place in Yellowstone National Park, for example, whereby huge tracts of forest have burned down. The difference between Yellowstone park and the province of Ontario is that Yellowstone has a burn policy, which essentially means that if it burns, if a fire starts, they let it go and they let it follow through to its natural completion, whereas here in Ontario we have decided to manage our forests in a considerably different way. We manage them by trying to put out the fires to the best of our abilities.

In other areas, such as practices that have normally taken place in the past since this government has come in, a considerable number of forestry changes have taken place. For example, normally speaking, in a thinning operation the cutters would go in. They're designed to thin a forest. In the past what typically took place was that they cut the trees down and left them there. They didn't find markets for them.

I have now spoken with a large number of cutters, skidder operations in the north, and these forests that are now just being thinned and left there are actually being utilized. The forest is being utilized; the same with burns. For example, in the past, when a burn would go through, normally nothing would take place, although we have now found markets for burned forests where forest cutters would go in, would cut down that burned area and would receive funds for doing that instead of just letting it lie.

Also, there have been a number of conversations regarding bear management. Typically speaking, in the past I know from my personal experience with the Ministry of Natural Resources before becoming elected, bears were always considered a nuisance animal and hence the more they got rid of, the better. As the member for Cochrane South indicates, that was a problem and the way we got rid of it was just to get rid of the population or deal with it in that manner.

However, since the time when you could shoot a bear on a deer licence, for example, it has now expanded to having its own specific licence where there is an unlimited number of licences allowed for individuals. Now this

government has actually restricted that to one per year. Also, now we have regulations which are dealing with spring bears and the running of dogs. Not only that, but this legislation, Bill 139, also deals with the licensing of those dogs. We are seeing a considerable number of changes. Personally, as one of the founding members of the South Central Ontario Forest Advisory Council — not only that but I also ran a lumber operation myself — I have a fairly strong contact with a number of MNR issues.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): Oh, that is why you were listening.

Mr Ouellette: Yes, to the member for Cochrane South. Now he understands how I know a little bit or something about the forest industry.

Actually the member for Cochrane South mentioned access roads. Some of the difficulty with access roads, such as the Sultan Road, which may be the road he was speaking about up in Chapleau, is that you open up these new roads and it allows a large number of individuals into these areas that haven't had significant management programs in the past, where there is lots of fish. Numbers of individuals go in, they start to harvest the fish and the population starts to drop, so we see a decline in numbers. There has to be some sort of balance in how you deal with that issue of opening up new areas for fishing and hunting purposes and how you come to agreement.

I've had individuals come up to me and tell me we should have stronger restrictions on accessing those roads where people are no longer allowed into those places. Also I think some of the changing practices — and we spoke about the number of reductions in ministry staff. I happen to know a fair number of the individuals in the ministry and, as a matter of fact, during the previous government I happen to remember one individual in the MNR receiving the employee of the year award, yet the next year, during the previous government, they found him surplus. Now explain these sorts of things.

I know there are a lot of issues, but I would like to point out one other thing, that peak periods within the hunting community would be representative of approximately 15% of the population; now my understanding is that is only representative of approximately 8% of the population, and hopefully those communities can start to grow back in because I know the significant importance in northern Ontario, and I'm hoping that this legislation will add to that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Questions or comments?

Mr Bisson: Now I understand why the parliamentary assistant was listening intently as I talked about forestry. I thought there was a connection there. So you understand —

Mr Ouellette: I'm not the PA.

Mr Bisson: No, you're not the PA, but you were listening none the less. I just want to say again, and the point I was trying to make this morning was, that you would understand probably more than most people in this House that a lot of the operators in the bush try to do it properly. But you know what happens. Once you don't have the people in the bush from the MNR watching

what's going on when it comes to creek crossings, it makes a lot easier for those shadier operators who are trying to make a quick buck just to throw a culvert in and run over the top and do what they've got to do. Unfortunately, the only way we're going to find out is when somebody happens to go fishing and there's no more fish there, or at the end of the five-year cycle when they come back to do the audit.

The point I was making to you this morning, and I'm glad you acknowledge it, is that you need to have some enforcement mechanism with laws like that. It's not that you want to make the rules and regulations so onerous that the little operator can't operate or the big operator can't operate. That's not the intent, but you have to have some provisions to make sure there are good practices when it comes to how we do that work.

The other issue around the question of closing access roads is that I understand as well as you do that you need to be able to manage the pressure on the fishery when it comes to particular areas. You wouldn't want one lake being hit by everybody in the neighbourhood. It wouldn't take very long for there not to be any fish in it.

The point I was talking about is when you're going in to cut in a particular area and the company expands an existing road that was there that was always used by people in the past. It's an old bush road and people have been using it for 30 or 40 years. The company comes in, they make the road better, they go and do their cut, then all of a sudden when they withdraw, they shut the road down. That's the point that I was making. When Don Collins from Timmins comes to me and he raises those issues, he's got a legitimate beef because those were roads that were used in the past, and only because the company expanded the operation they shouldn't have the right to close that road down after. Yes, good management, but not to just block people out.

1520

The Acting Speaker: Questions or comments? If not, the member for Oshawa, you have two minutes.

Mr Ouellette: I enjoy this debate very much. The member for Cochrane South mentioned about the enforcement issue. Actually when Mr Wildman was the Minister of Natural Resources I approached him at a meeting in Barrie and we discussed this issue and I know our government is currently following up on it.

What I had done with the issue was that in the region of Durham, where we had 1.5 officers during the previous government's era covering the entire region of Durham, I established a training program whereby we trained all the Durham Regional Police Force in their in-service training program so that they could enforce the Game and Fish Act. Police officers actually have the legal right to enforce the fish and game act; they just don't have the training. What we did there was we effectively put officers in the region of Durham dealing with the fish and game issues. I know the government is currently looking at expanding that possibly to the entire province. I think it's a good program.

Also, the member speaks about the 30 years going into these areas with new roads. However, I think if you look

at the fact of the changes in technology within the past 30 years as well, 30 years ago we didn't have downriggers that they're using in these inner lakes and we didn't have fish-finders that now can locate and actually harvest the fish. I've had a number of clubs and organizations come to me and ask that we should have restrictions in those areas because of winter fishing pressure and because of the technological pressures.

I thank you for the comments and I thank you for the opportunity to speak to that today.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): It's nice to pass an act like this because I understand all three governments in the past had been trying to get an act like this approved and we have all-party agreement that this one should be approved, but I still think it's necessary to make a couple of comments about the enforcement provisions of the act and how the ministry staff can possibly deal with it.

I think the first thing everyone ought to bear in mind is that the budget of the Ministry of Natural Resources in the last two years has declined by \$150 million. It's gone from \$519 million two years ago to \$369 million. That is a decline of some 35% of the actual money that's being spent by the ministry.

How does this translate into the personnel power within the ministry? It is my information that 43% of the workforce has been laid off since the beginning of this government — 2,170 positions have been eliminated. When you consider that a lot of these positions were in the enforcement area, you can well understand that there is a major concern out there that we have very few staff left to inspect, charge and prosecute under the bill.

When you look at some of the provisions that are contained in the bill, it's kind of interesting. The limitation power on prosecutions has been increased from six months to two years. If you wanted to be cynical about it, one of the reasons for that is the mere fact that there are fewer officers to look after the investigations and the prosecutions right now and they need more time to get this done, to get the process started.

To a certain extent it's self-serving to go from a six-month limitation period to a two-year limitation period. It's needed because the people simply aren't there to do the job any more.

It also states that commercial penalties under the act are increased to up to \$100,000 and imprisonment for up to two years. That's all wonderful and great to state in practice, but it would be very interesting to see, after this act has been proclaimed for a year, how many prosecutions have actually been started and been obtained under this section of the act. There's a theory that if you make the consequences too severe — I'm not saying that they are but certainly a \$100,000 fine and a two-year imprisonment are pretty severe — there will be less likelihood for the officers involved who will be laying these charges to actually lay them, because they want to be doubly sure that they can get a conviction.

Finally, there will be a prohibition of possession of animals that were illegally taken from another jurisdiction.

Our point is quite simply this, and it has been made before: You haven't got enough resources within the Ministry of Natural Resources to enforce the legislation you've got on the books right now. Although this may look very good from a public relations viewpoint, particularly since it has all-party consent, I for one believe we shouldn't be passing laws if we don't have the proper enforcement mechanisms.

In our opinion, the fact that 43% of the ministry staff has been laid off in the last two years, that is simply too drastic a decline in the workforce to do the job effectively, not only under this act but under many of the other acts that are administered by the Ministry of Natural Resources.

All you has to do is go into rural Ontario, where many of the ministry offices are located, and you will find out the drastic effects that the cuts in the workforce have had to the various communities that these offices are located in.

With that, I will simply yield the floor to someone else who wants to speak. I say once again to the government, don't pass laws if you don't intend to enforce them or if you haven't got the workforce to do an adequate job in that regard.

The Acting Speaker: Questions or comments?

Mr Bisson: By way of opportunity, it allows us to make the point again that the member spoke to, which is that whenever the government goes forward and introduces legislation like this — which is good positive legislation to put in place, I think with some sound principles when it comes to the management of the fishery and game in the province of Ontario — the government has to be able to enforce it. We can't repeat that enough times.

It would be almost like the government saying, "We're going to pass a law that says you can't go over a certain limit on the highway when it comes to speed," but then they take all the OPP or all the municipal police off the highway. What would be the point of creating the law? People wouldn't follow the law because they would know there's no police out there to enforce the law that's been passed in this Legislature.

I think the point is well made: You can't on the one hand introduce legislation, which is positive and we give you full credit for it, but on the other hand take away 50% of the ministry staff who are there to enforce the law. I think it's a huge gap and at one point we're going to have to come to terms with that. I think the comments the member makes are on the mark and they're something the government should be listening to.

Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton North): I would like to point out that the ministry's commitment is to maintaining the 281 badges that are currently in force for the conservation officers, although there has been some redeployment of these officers to reflect modern conservation methods and modern crime fighting methods to ensure the maximum use of these people so they can continue to enforce the statutes of the Game and Fish Act and now the new conservation act, which will maintain and protect Ontario's wildlife.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): The member gave an excellent speech on this bill. My concern is for the game and fish as it relates to the Niagara Escarpment. I know sometimes members don't get as much time as they would like to discuss this, and I wonder if the member is worried that perhaps the government might appoint to the Niagara Escarpment Commission people who would not necessarily be in favour of protecting the Niagara Escarpment, as my friend from Dufferin-Peel and I would worry, and certainly the Minister of Environment and Energy, who is a long-time supporter of the protection of the Niagara Escarpment lands. I know he would be worried about potential development that would take place there —

Interjection.

Mr Bradley: The member who is intervening obviously wants to see development. But I know the Minister of Environment and Energy was one of the people instrumental in having the first plan brought forward, and until a recent time had responsibility for the Niagara Escarpment as Minister of Environment. I wonder whether the member for Kingston and The Islands believes it would be, first of all, advantageous to have Mr Sterling, who has the position of Minister of the Environment, restored to jurisdiction over the Niagara Escarpment; and second, whether he believes that those who are appointed to the Niagara Escarpment Commission — unlike Mr Seabrook, who had to leave very recently because of another incident that happened — whether he believes that the people who are appointed to the Niagara Escarpment Commission, as I know my friend from Carleton would believe, should be those who are dedicated to protecting escarpment lands and not those dedicated to allowing development to take place in a place of natural beauty such as the Niagara Escarpment.

1530

The Acting Speaker: Questions or comments? Then, the member for Kingston and The Islands, you have two minutes.

Mr Gerretsen: The talents of the member for St Catharines are certainly stunning, because although I did not mention the Niagara Escarpment during my speech, it was on my mind throughout, and the concerns he has raised here are extremely valid. Yes, we are concerned that the Niagara Escarpment should once again be brought under the control of the Ministry of the Environment. It is a real, true jewel on the landscape of Ontario and it ought to be preserved and saved at all costs. Certainly we would not want that natural landscape beauty to be in any way, shape or form affected by any negative action that may now take place because it is no longer under the control of the Ministry of the Environment. I did not speak about it directly but it was on my mind throughout, as it is always on my mind whenever I think of the member for St Catharines, because we know of the love he has for the Niagara Escarpment.

I was somewhat surprised by the comments from the member for Halton North when he talked about the fact that some of these officers have been redeployed within the ministry. I'm not sure what he's saying by that. All I

know is that the workforce within the Ministry of Natural Resources has been cut by 2,170 positions; 43% of their entire workforce is no longer employed there. When you consider that one of the prime functions the ministry is involved in is to make sure that the laws we pass in this House that deal with our natural resources are properly enforced and protected etc, then I can only come to the conclusion that we simply do not have the proper number of people on the force to look after enforcement.

The Acting Speaker: Mr Snobelen has moved third reading of Bill 139.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

MILK AMENDMENT ACT, 1997

LOI DE 1997 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LE LAIT

Mr Villeneuve moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 170, An Act to amend the Milk Act / Projet de loi 170, Loi modifiant la Loi sur le lait.

Hon Noble Villeneuve (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, minister responsible for francophone affairs): It's a pleasure to bring this act to fruition to meet the needs of dairy farmers and make sure that the quality of our dairy products continues as we've known it.

In May we signed an agreement in principle with the Dairy Farmers of Ontario setting out the roles and responsibilities of each one of the partners. Since then, we've been working with the Dairy Farmers of Ontario to ensure that the transition is smooth and that the program continues to retain the high quality of raw milk prior to processing that we've known over the last number of years.

This indeed is a true partnership. The government, through the Ontario Farm Products Marketing Commission, will continue to set health and safety standards for raw milk and cream, and ultimately the minister will always be responsible. However, the service will be delivered through the Dairy Farmers of Ontario.

In addition, the ministry will continue to be responsible for monitoring and auditing the inspection and enforcement activities. Several of the ministry's milk quality advisers will be hired by the Dairy Farmers of Ontario for the program. In order to support a smooth transition, the ministry will be contributing some \$300,000 annually for the next four years. That, over a four-year term, is over \$1 million to ensure the support of the Dairy Farmers of Ontario and to ensure that quality dairy products continue to be provided to our consumers.

For their part, the Dairy Farmers of Ontario will deliver inspection and other services related to primary production and transportation of milk and cream prior to processing. It frees up business from the burdens of unnecessary overhead costs and red tape and allows them to

do what they do best: spur economic growth, create jobs and ensure that the product that is theirs is indeed of the highest quality.

In the short time that it's been up and running, Agricorp has signed up 1,800 new clients to its crop insurance plans. This is simply a comparison of what the private sector, administered by the people who are involved in the business, can do for themselves. Agricorp has the distinction of being the lowest-cost provider of crop insurance per client in the country, and we're proud of that. It is constantly improving its customer service.

While the service delivery arrangements for raw milk inspection I am talking about today with the Dairy Farmers of Ontario isn't exactly the same, I am confident that it will be equally successful as Agricorp has been over the past 12 months. My reasoning is that the Dairy Farmers of Ontario have the knowledge, experience, leadership and the resources to do the job and to do it well, and they are a natural.

For more than 30 years the Dairy Farmers of Ontario have proven time and time again their ability to anticipate and deliver on the services needed to build a strong, prosperous dairy industry in Ontario, and that is what we now have and we will continue to have.

Just a few of the statistics: Ontario produces 2.3 billion litres of milk annually, with farm-gate values of some \$1.3 billion. The dairy industry accounts for 30% of the country's industrial milk production, second only to our friends in the province of Quebec.

The organization is also extremely adept at marketing. I'm sure we're all familiar with the milk calendar that was distributed in many newspapers here not long ago. It's an effective way to get consumers to buy, drink and use milk products. You've also probably seen the Dairy Farmers of Ontario's attractive "Drink Milk, Love Life" television commercials.

Dairy Farmers of Ontario know the dairy industry inside out. Through comprehensive market research it has demonstrated a keen sense of what consumers need and want. It knows intimately the needs of its members and can ensure that the quality of raw milk remains their responsibility and increase the competitiveness of both their product and the entire industry.

Dairy Farmers of Ontario have also shown that they know what it takes to meet the demands of its consumers, especially the importance of delivering high-quality product on time and in a sufficient quantity. The dairy industry has an excellent reputation for producing safe, high-quality products and remains that way.

With the amendments contained in Bill 170, the third reading of which will occur today, the program will be delivered in a way that simplifies the system, helps the food industry grow and above all protects Ontario consumers. As I've said many times, when the agrifood industry thrives in Ontario all Ontario residents benefit.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Questions or comments?

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): I won't be long, since this is question and comment period, but let me just say that the government has been saying

over the last number of days that the opposition is to be blamed for delay in action on a lot of these bills. I hope the Minister of Agriculture will take note of the fact that he first introduced this bill on December 4 of this year, 14 days ago, and here we are today, ready to give this bill third reading.

Maybe this ought to be a lesson for the government. If you bring in good legislation that the people of Ontario believe in, the opposition will work with you to make sure that the legislation we require for the good of all the people of Ontario will be passed as soon as possible. On the other hand, if you bring in legislation, like you did with Bill 160, that is detrimental to the people and the students of Ontario, or Bill 149, where you bring in tax cuts for some people and not for other people, when you shouldn't be giving tax cuts at all, the opposition will fight you on a day-to-day, toe-to-toe basis.

1540

But this is a good bill, I understand from my critic. He knows all about milk. We have one of the best ag critics this party has ever had, and I would like to pay tribute to the member for Essex-Kent for the fantastic job he has done to give our caucus leadership with respect to agricultural issues.

Minister, keep bringing in good legislation and we will pass it as soon as possible, but if you or other members of your government bring in legislation that is to the detriment of the people of Ontario, we will fight you tooth and nail.

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): I'm happy to have an opportunity to respond to the minister. He makes these claims and tries to suggest that somebody on this side of the House is trying to hold up this bill, and he may just convince a few people. I'd like to remind the minister that he got caught having signed a memorandum of agreement with the Dairy Farmers of Ontario last May and not having introduced the enabling legislation until December 4. When they became panicky, realizing that a prorogue was going to happen, he had to act quickly, yet he stands and claims that somehow we all are trying to hold it up.

It's important for people to understand that this is an important act. There are many concerns that have been raised about issues like whether the standards will be maintained over time, after the first four years of the agreement; whether, over time, the cost to farmers is going to grow and grow when the government subsidy leaves the field. Those are all concerns, but generally speaking, although we want to raise those concerns and put the government on notice that we'll be monitoring very carefully what happens in terms of the implementation of this plan, there is no desire on the part of this side of the House to hold this bill up.

Mr David Tilson (Dufferin-Peel): I want to congratulate the Minister of Agriculture for giving the fine speech he did and introducing this piece of legislation. I know the dairy industry will appreciate it. It will make the process much simpler. Certainly the consumer as well will appreciate this type of legislation. Congratulations to the Minister of Agriculture for the fine job he's doing.

The Acting Speaker: Further questions or comments?

Mr Mario Sergio (Yorkview): I want to compliment, myself —

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): Compliment myself?

Mr Sergio: Yes, compliment, myself, the minister, yes, indeed, on the introduction of this particular piece of legislation.

Interjection.

Mr Sergio: Yes, I can do it both ways.

Hon Mr Villeneuve: Careful, you might cause injury.

Mr Sergio: Not with milk, Mr Minister.

I think you were quite right when you said we have to be very careful when we deal with our dairy farmers in Ontario, not only because they create jobs and improve the economy, but when you deal with the delivery of 2.3 billion litres of milk, I think you said, that's a lot, and it's one of the most important ingredients we use daily in our homes. It is not only the improvement in the economy; it's also to maintain and improve the quality of those millions of litres of milk that are being consumed by people every day in Ontario.

We encourage the government to continue to support our dairy farmers. They occupy one of the most important economic vehicles here in Ontario. Any pressures brought upon our farmers can only deliver less quality in our homes and in our families.

Let me say there is a lot of pressure also brought upon our farmers from the larger ones. There are many smaller farmers who have continuous problems, and if they are to remain viable and be competitive, not only within our own local markets but with other markets as well — and there is a lot of pressure — we have to continue to support them.

I appreciate the minister being responsible for the introduction of this legislation. We support it.

The Acting Speaker: Response, Minister.

Hon Mr Villeneuve: I want to thank my colleagues from all sides of the House: Kingston and The Islands, London Centre, Dufferin-Peel and Yorkview.

We are all consumers, and as we get into some modern farming practices, the number of producers is always reducing.

I found it a little strange. When the member for London Centre's government was in power, they reduced the numbers of dairy inspectors from 36 to 12. That was done in 1993. I had a little bit of difficulty when the leader of that party was up here last night trying to chastise the government. They did it in one fell swoop, reduced by two thirds the dairy inspectors in Ontario. I understand that yes, they had to do a little bit like what this government is doing. They had to be more efficient, and they also realized that they probably had to do as much with a little bit less. They started to recognize that. I am sometimes very disappointed that this very same party is very negative about trying to balance the budget, and that budget is not an easy one to balance; it has been very difficult. However, we have to do what the private sector has done over many years: We have to do more with less as a government, as private individuals, and indeed this is what this government is attempting to do.

The Dairy Farmers of Ontario have been very helpful and have worked together with the ministry to ensure the quality of our dairy products, particularly that of raw milk, from the dairy farmer's production base to where the processing occurs.

Mr Wildman: We are on your side. You can't take support, can you?

Hon Mr Villeneuve: We can very much take support and we appreciate the support, but sometimes, when the comments come from the other side of the House, knowing what they did in their day, it's a little difficult to swallow.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Pat Hoy (Essex-Kent): I'm pleased to rise today on third reading of Bill 170, An Act to amend the Milk Act. I just want to inform the House that the member for Yorkview was raised on a farm and has indeed milked cows. He understands full well the value of that industry.

Today, on third reading of Bill 170, we're talking about a change that the minister announced to the raw milk quality program back in May 1997. He made this announcement fully seven months ago in conjunction with the Dairy Farmers of Ontario, and he announced that this program was going to go through some change. However, as has been alluded to by others, we did not see any legislation until December 4, when the minister brought about first reading.

The people watching today should understand that the introduction of bills within this place can occur every day. As a matter of fact, under routine proceedings, it is the third thing we do in the chamber: We have members' statements, reports by committees and then introduction of bills. That could have been done at any time so that we in the opposition, the third party, farmers and those very interested in this bill could have had a chance to look at it. But no, we didn't get that until December 4, and we are now looking at third reading with no days left in the legislative calendar. There are no days left. The government has seen fit to leave this agricultural bill to this late date, and if the government had not extended the sittings of this House for this week, I dare say we would not have seen this bill at all, and it would not have passed.

1550

The management by the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs with regard to this agricultural bill, and quite frankly with regard to Bill 146, which is now going out for committee hearings, has been a very dismal one. I want to read from the Minister of Agriculture's news release, dated May 2, 1997:

"An agreement in principle that paves the way for industry to deliver Ontario's raw milk quality program was announced today by Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs Minister Noble Villeneuve, and the Dairy Farmers of Ontario," more commonly known as the DFO. "DFO is the marketing group for all 7,800 dairy farms in Ontario and is totally financed by them."

Here we clearly see that an agreement was in the works and on its way fully seven months ago. On May 2, cash crop farmers could have planted a crop, had it develop throughout the summer, had it ripen, harvested it, and in

some cases had it dried and in storage. A whole crop year could have passed from the time the minister said he had an agreement to the time he brought it to this Legislature. As a matter of fact, in the case of corn and soy beans, they would have been off some months ago.

The release says: "The raw milk quality program ensures the high quality and safety of raw milk prior to processing, through a combination of dairy farm inspection and laboratory testing. Ten milk quality advisors achieve these objectives by monitoring safety and quality test results and working with producers to take appropriate corrective action." The laboratory testing function of the program will not change.

Here we had a change announced in May but not brought before the Legislature until this very late date. The dairy farmers were quite aware of all this. They knew full well that legislation was required in order to make this agreement valid.

On November 11 of this year, in one of the DFO's publications, they said: "The transfer of the raw milk quality program from the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs was announced last May and should take place in early 1998," just a few weeks from now. "The transition date was dependent on timing of necessary legislative change."

I say to the ministry and the minister that leaving agricultural issues and agricultural change to this late date is poor management on the government's part. If the ministry is going to force change, it should stick to a timetable that allows for that change to happen in an easily flowing manner.

As well, the chairman, John Core, on May 30 made this remark: "It had become obvious that if we wanted to maintain our standards in the face of government cut-backs, the Dairy Farmers of Ontario had to assume responsibility for those standards. We were able to negotiate transition funding for four years from the government."

We see from the comments given by Mr Core, chairman of the Dairy Farmers of Ontario, that the government was cutting back. I believe the Dairy Farmers of Ontario had very little choice but to go into this agreement. To maintain the integrity of their operations and the integrity of their industry they had very little choice but to go into this particular arrangement.

This is plain and simple. The government is cutting agriculture once again. The \$300,000 annually that the government will transfer to the Dairy Farmers of Ontario to run this program will only last for four years, and then who will fund this program? I fully expect that it will be the milk producers of Ontario.

The \$300,000 annually that the ministry is going to transfer to the Dairy Farmers of Ontario is less money than it spends on this program currently. It is a cut from what they are now spending.

The Dairy Farmers of Ontario are going to have to pick up these costs at a later date, and that for them will be a user fee. We all know that Michael Harris said that a user fee is nothing more than a tax.

Once again, the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs is cutting agriculture. The minister knows, as do I, that the agricultural sector currently is doing quite well. Grains and oil seeds in the past few years have seen near record prices. I think most of the agricultural sectors are doing very well, and even those sectors that are influenced by feed costs continue to do very well, but I think the minister would know that the cycle within the agricultural community is such that pricing is not always predictable, that prices rise and prices fall.

To download on to the farmers of Ontario, at a time when I would admit they are doing well, could have great ramifications in the poorer years. I hate to predict that they will come, but history has shown us that prices rise and fall quite dramatically in the agricultural sector.

The minister was asked to address concerns from his colleague from Guelph in regard to this bill. The minister unfortunately didn't really answer the question but I give him the opportunity to do that today. The member for Guelph, a government member, asked the minister on December 9 here in question period:

"The constituents in Guelph and across this province are concerned about the health quality issues of raw milk testing and they're also concerned about the ongoing issues of giving a non-governmental organization a responsibility like this. I would like some further information on this and assurances about how the quality of milk will be protected for our consumers."

The minister did not choose to answer this question. He didn't answer it directly nor did he answer it indirectly. But he did say, in part, "to meet the deal that had been done between the Dairy Farmers of Ontario and the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs," therefore, we need this act.

I would like to have the minister give his opinion on the non-governmental organization, but as I say, I don't believe the Dairy Farmers of Ontario had very much choice other than to take this route with the Ministry of Agriculture and Food.

The minister went on to say in regard to the previous government, now the third party, "They cut by two thirds the inspectors in the raw milk area and now they're trying to preach to us."

I say to the minister that seems to fail the test. If he criticizes one government for doing an action and then turns around and completely removes the program from OMAFRA, I can't find his reasoning in that regard. I assumed he disagreed with that decision to remove two thirds of the inspectors. I also assumed that he disagreed with his own government's decision not to reinstate them. He also must have disagreed with their decision to cut fruit and vegetable inspectors, despite the protests of the Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association and farmers across the province.

I say to the minister that he cannot have it both ways. He cannot criticize the government for taking away two thirds of the inspectors and then be disavowing the whole program and passing on to the Dairy Farmers of Ontario what remains of the program.

The program has progressed to such a state, and as I say, we did not have first reading until December 4, but in the Ontario Farmer on December 9, a few short days ago, the Dairy Farmers of Ontario had an article printed through a reporter that shows all of the zones and all of the staff people who have been hired to deliver this particular program. They go through zone A to zone P. They have hired these staff, although there are vacancies in some of the areas, but they have hired staff and moved along under an agreement that was made and hopefully, when this legislation is passed, all this will be validated so that this can occur on January 1, 1998.

1600

Dairy Farmers of Ontario field staff completed the latest in a series of two-day training sessions last week as the organization prepares to take over the raw milk quality program from OMAFRA. As part of the transfer, the DFO will integrate the responsibility for raw milk quality issues and farmers' premises inspection together with a revised version of the current role of field representatives, and I'm only going to read parts of this.

"The target date for the DFO to take over the raw milk quality program is January 1, but meeting that date depends on the timing of approval by the Ontario Legislature to regulatory changes that will give the DFO the authority for raw milk quality."

Clearly, the farm organization in question, the Dairy Farmers, has moved along significantly in anticipation of legislation that would allow them to do this. As I say, they have set up zones and staff people; they give the names for persons from zone A to zone P, although there are perhaps one or two vacancies yet to be filled.

Clearly, the DFO has done its work. They have consulted with their members, they have made job offers, they've had significant job training programs supporting these changes and they've revised the field services area.

I think it's important that within the legislation there is nothing that specifies that the Dairy Farmers of Ontario will be the agent of this change. There's nothing in the legislation that specifies that the Dairy Farmers of Ontario will be those agents, and I quote from the bill itself, Bill 170: "'administrative agreement' in relation to a designated administrative authority means an agreement that the minister has entered into with the authority with respect to the designated legislation for which the administration and enforcement is delegated to the authority." But it does not specify that the Dairy Farmers of Ontario will always have this opportunity to be involved in the inspection of the raw milk product.

I think the Dairy Farmers did a fine job in preparing for this. I think the government did a poor job of preparing for this with an announcement made on May 2 in regard to this plan, no first reading of a bill until December 4 and a seven-month waiting period for the legislation in a bill that only has 13 pages. This is not one of the larger bills that the government has introduced in this House. We know that we've had many, many bills that have been significantly bigger and more complex than Bill 170.

In this time there have been 56 bills discussed in this House. Between the time of the minister's announcement and just a few short days ago, 56 bills have been discussed in the House and it's possible that number could even be greater. In light of the red tape bills that we had a few nights ago and in preparation for this, we calculated that there were 56 bills.

What were some of those bills? What were some of the bills that were so important that the government waited until this last hour, this last day, to present Bill 170 for third reading? There was a red tape bill introduced, Bill 115, Ministry of Finance. Ironically, the Red Tape Reduction Act in regard to the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs was introduced, Bill 116, but it has not been dealt with. The Tartan Act has been introduced in this House; zero tolerance for substance abuse, a good bill, good intentions, but it came before this bill.

There were many. There are pages and pages of bills that came before this House in the interim of the minister making an agreement and actually seeking legislation to allow himself and the dairy farmers of Ontario to validate that very same agreement. Those other items were all priorities over and above what the Minister of Agriculture wanted to present to us in the last few days.

I really am concerned about the priority within the government ranks in regard to agriculture. I think, as was mentioned previously by others, these bills are not terribly contentious. In fact, if this is the only opportunity for the Dairy Farmers of Ontario to maintain the integrity of their industry, I suppose it would be a good bill.

Why are we leaving this to the very last minute? Why did we not show the public what was in this bill until December 4? I wonder if the government really wants to limit the debate on agricultural issues in total. I don't think they see their record as all that shining. Why do I say that? Because when we came to this place, the very first thing the Minister of Agriculture and the government did was they cut agricultural funding. They cut about \$81 million from the agricultural budget and then, in a subsequent budget, they added about \$5 million back, but still the cuts remain.

What is the government's vision for agriculture here in this great province of Ontario, so rich with agricultural diversity? What is their vision? I say in the last two and a half years their vision has been one of cuts, one of user fees, one of downloading, and not very many things that were positive.

I want to speak just a little bit about AgriCorp because the minister brought it up last night in his opening remarks. The minister would know that our party introduced amendments to the legislation that created AgriCorp that would have made it public for the directives the minister gave to AgriCorp and it would have made it public for the business plan that AgriCorp presented to the ministry. The public would know. They would know the intentions of the ministry; they would know the business plan for AgriCorp. But the government voted those amendments down. So why the big secrecy? Why the

secrecy in regard to AgriCorp and what they may do in the future?

I want to spend just a moment to speak about the minister's rural job strategy. It came out in the May budget. I would admit that over the summer OMAFRA did indeed spend approximately \$3 million on the summer program for jobs for youth. That was an ongoing program. There was nothing terribly new about it. But none of this money has flowed within the rural job strategy to this date. Again, many months go by and none of these moneys have flowed into the rural communities.

The very interesting thing I find about what little bit the ministry will let me know about the rural job strategy — and I say “very little” — is that there's no jobs target. In every release that the minister or the ministry have put out, there is no jobs target at all. The minister stated here in the House — I paraphrase — how he would like to see young people stay in the rural communities, spend the rest of their lives there, have families and contribute to rural Ontario. I would have thought the government would have had a target as to how many people they actually wanted to see employed through what is called a rural jobs strategy, but I find no numerical reference to how many jobs the government actually wants to create out of this. With the title “jobs strategy,” I would have thought there would be some criteria and some target for those job creation numbers.

1610

We see that the ministry is cutting, downloading, putting off to others what had been a traditional responsibility of the Ontario government in the past. I want to cite an example of where haste, poor thought and downloading have actually harmed one area of agriculture in Ontario. I want to talk about the farm museum at Milton.

The government cut \$1.8 million in 1996 from the farm museum, which was formerly known as the Ontario Agricultural Museum. It was announced in 1995, but the cuts actually didn't take place until 1996. The farm museum, in my mind, is one of the best places to go in Ontario, perhaps indeed even Canada, to learn about the history of agriculture.

I travelled to the farm museum many years ago, when my children were a bit younger. They were amazed at what they saw. They were amazed at what the people had to endure and how they lived many years ago. They saw farm equipment that they couldn't even describe because it was so far back into history. Of course, technology has changed those types of machinery for the most part. Many of those machines were operated by horsepower — and I mean horses. Then, of course, the steam engine came along and changed things, and the gasoline engine, and there were many changes to agriculture.

The farm museum is having difficulties now. Those families and those children — I understand that about 50% of the people who visit the museum are children — may not be able to attend that museum again unless individuals can rise to the occasion and find funding that was traditionally provided by the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food. There's where poor planning, haste and a run to

make cuts can harm what I think is a model for people to go and visit and look at what our past has been. It's a great place.

Not only that, in the rural communities there are some townships and small villages that have museums, on a much smaller scale, perhaps in an old schoolhouse — one comes to mind in Tilbury West — and they are having trouble. With the downloading that the government is putting on to municipalities, they don't know if they can keep these small rural museums that give a history for all of us to envision, and particularly our youth. Of course, youth are going to be very important within the agricultural community, not just in the processing end, not just in the delivery and service end, but also we have to have people who understand the industry, have a history for it, a love for it and actually want to be farmers at the gate, ready to produce that fine food that everyone eats.

Research and development is an issue that the government is lax on. I think they've shirked their duties in regard to research and development. I was speaking with an ag group just recently that said they had to now pick up the slack because the government is not funding research and development in the way it did. I see that to be nothing other than a user fee put down on to the producers in this province to fund their very own research and development that in the prior days had been done by the government.

We know that some have said that every dollar put into research and development can give a \$40 return. I've said to many, "If you could get that kind of return at the bank, we'd all be in that same bank building." That's a great return. We don't have to go out and buy technology from other countries; we can do it here. It will be our very own. It will be what we require for our needs that are peculiar to Ontario, and the added bonus would be that we can sell this technology to other countries. I don't think anyone for a moment would say that this is not a technological age. Biotechnology is going to grow. I think it's going to explode. It's going to grow and grow. In the agricultural area, some of these technologies will also be good in the area of health and give us all a better life. I say to the minister, don't shirk your duties when it comes to research and development. Stay involved in that.

I'm also hearing from people who have a great concern about cuts to our universities, in particular the University of Guelph, and that further cuts to the University of Guelph could have an impact on our colleges at Ridgeway, Alfred and Kemptonville.

I called the ministry way back and I asked: "What is this shift of OMAFRA employees to the University of Guelph? How is that saving us money? You just shifted them from OMAFRA over to Guelph and about 100 or so people over to AgriCorp." The ministry staff told me the savings or the benefit to doing this will come in other years as we cut the universities.

We will support Bill 170. I don't think the Dairy Farmers of Ontario have much choice in this regard. We have seen the diminishing of inspectors and we have seen what the minister wants in an agreement with the Dairy

Farmers of Ontario. I think one of the reasons is that the dairy farmers need to maintain the integrity of their industry, an industry that has been well maintained over the years.

I also want to point out to those who may be watching that we're talking about raw milk, and there is indeed another inspection process after the farm. People will recall the word "pasteurize," and milk is pasteurized beyond the farm gate, so there are other inspections beyond that which I think are significant to the debate we are having here this afternoon.

The consumers know full well that milk is a product they can have trust in. I have given the results of a survey, and 100% of the people who were asked thought that milk was good for people of all ages. That's quite a product to be proud of, a product that people can say categorically, 100%, is good for people of all ages. We know that the Dairy Farmers of Ontario are good corporate citizens. Within their communities they donate milk to our schools. It's processed, delivered by trucks in either bags or those small jugs, and the Dairy Farmers of Ontario in 1996 donated 370,000 litres of milk.

1620

The member for Windsor-Sandwich asked the government many months ago to think about a breakfast program, and here we learn that the Dairy Farmers of Ontario, the good corporate people they are within their communities, donated 370,000 litres of milk in 1996 to our schools. It included all cost of processing and transportation of that milk. So we can see that the Dairy Farmers of Ontario clearly are responsible within their communities.

The provincial governments are primarily responsible for inspecting fluid milk. The dairy farmer must be licensed by a provincial milk marketing board before he or she can sell milk. Provincial government inspectors visit the farm to make sure it meets their standards. That was in the past; now the Dairy Farmers of Ontario take that on. In Ontario, the Ontario Milk Marketing Board takes samples of every shipment of milk it picks up from Ontario dairy farms. These samples are sent to provincial government milk testing laboratories. The laboratory tests the milk shipments for composition and other things. When milk is delivered to the processing plant, plant employees check the shipment to ensure, again, that it is safe. Federal and provincial inspectors monitor the milk during all stages of processing. By the time milk reaches your table, a glass of milk produced in Canada is one of the most highly inspected food products in the world.

We will support this bill with regard — basically, I don't think the Dairy Farmers of Ontario had very much choice. We learned from the minister himself that inspectors were cut by two thirds by the previous government, and in some sense that I can't really understand he is now saying, "I don't want any part of it." He criticizes the demise of two thirds of the inspectors, but now he says he doesn't want any part of it. He's going to hand that over to the Dairy Farmers of Ontario, he's going to fund it

for only four years and then I suspect the Dairy Farmers of Ontario will be left with that cost. So it's a downloading.

Before I turn this debate over to my friend from Prescott-Russell, I want to congratulate everyone in this House for their fine efforts over the year. I want to wish everyone a happy holiday season. That includes members and their staff and the staff throughout this precinct. I wish them well in the new year. As well, I want particularly to wish a happy new year and a joyous Christmas season to all those fine people in Essex-Kent.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Questions and comments?

Mr Sergio: Thank you very much —

Interjection: You can't comment.

The Deputy Speaker: You're sharing your time, so this is not questions and comments? Sorry.

M. Jean-Marc Lalonde (Prescott et Russell) : C'est un grand plaisir pour moi de vous adresser la parole sur le projet de loi 170, Loi modifiant la Loi sur le lait.

Ce projet de loi est conçu pour permettre au ministre de l'Agriculture de déléguer les responsabilités de l'inspection à une autorité administrative désignée. Le gouvernement a fait part de son intention de faire de la Fédération ontarienne des producteurs de lait, soit l'organisme de réglementation qui régit la commercialisation du lait cru en Ontario, l'autorité désignée pour ces inspections.

Le projet de loi instaure un cadre de travail par lequel l'autorité désignée devra régir une gamme de normes de fonctionnement établies par le gouvernement. Parmi ces normes, on compte — tout d'abord, la fédération devrait s'assurer des cinq points suivants : le maintien d'une assurance-responsabilité adéquate ; la spécification des responsabilités législatives qui seront transférées ; les modalités financières des responsabilités transférées — par exemple, le droit d'appliquer des frais ; les frais d'accès aux actifs et renseignements du gouvernement ; et le cinquième point, les exigences relatives aux rapports réguliers de production. Je ne suis pas certain que tous les agriculteurs sont au courant que l'inspection du lait va être légiféré à ce point.

Lorsque nous regardons ce projet de loi, on pourrait dire qu'on va mettre beaucoup d'effort sur l'inspection du lait. L'inspection est d'une grande, grande importance dans notre province, dans notre pays. On doit s'assurer que nous, Canadiens et Canadiennes, Ontariens et Ontariennes, avons toujours la meilleure qualité de lait, et aussi s'assurer qu'il n'y ait aucune contamination dans le lait.

Mais je regarde : nous allons surtout procéder à l'embauche de 16 inspecteurs de lait pour les 16 régions. J'espère que nous avons reconnu que nous avons des zones, des régions désignées bilingues. Si je regarde, nous avons encore la zone B qui est vacante, où nous n'avons pas trouvé d'inspecteur. Pourquoi n'avons-nous pas trouvé d'inspecteur pour cette zone ? C'est simple. Nous retardons, nous nous traînons les pieds depuis maintenant le 4 décembre, quand nous avons présenté ce projet de loi, et je pourrais dire que c'est depuis le mois de mai que nous en parlons.

Nous avons certainement trouvé des inspecteurs compétents pour la position de la zone B, mais nous avons attendu tellement longtemps, on ne savait pas, « Est-ce que je vais avoir un emploi ou non ? » Une personne de haute compétence finalement s'est trouvé un emploi ailleurs.

Donc, aujourd'hui nous allons définitivement supporter ce projet de loi 170, qui est vraiment un outil de travail pour nos agriculteurs, mais une chose qui est très importante aussi, c'est que j'espère que les agriculteurs ou la Fédération des fermes laitières sont au courant de ce qui les attend.

Lorsque je regarde que dans ce projet de loi nous allons allouer 300 000 \$ par année pour une période de quatre ans, est-ce que les gens ont déjà fait le calcul de jusqu'à quel point on va récompenser ou bien qu'on va remettre l'argent à la Fédération des fermes laitières ? Cela représente un salaire de seulement 18 750 \$ par inspecteur, incluant toute dépense de déplacement. Qui allons-nous trouver pour 18 750 \$ par année ? Je ne crois pas qu'on puisse en trouver.

Mais dans tous les projets de loi que nous avons passés ici en Chambre, il y avait toujours quelque point qui était caché. Le point caché que vous voyez dans ce projet de loi, c'est les frais d'utilisateur. J'ai bien analysé le projet de loi et je peux dire qu'il y a un endroit qui m'inquiète beaucoup. C'est la partie 4(1)(b). La partie 4(1) dit,

«Un fonctionnaire ou un inspecteur itinérant de la Commission ou une personne qu'elle nomme pour examiner les livres, les dossiers, les documents, l'équipement et les locaux des personnes qui se livrent à la production, à la transformation ou à la commercialisation du lait ou de produits de lait peuvent, selon le cas...

«(b) obtenir, aux frais du propriétaire — aux frais de l'agriculteur — un échantillon de lait ou de produit du lait en vue d'en faire l'examen.»

Personne n'est égal à me répondre à date, qu'est-ce qu'on veut dire ? Quel est le montant que l'agriculteur va être obligé de déboursier ? Parce que c'est clair : «obtenir, aux frais du propriétaire». On ne sait vraiment pas.

Dans ma circonscription actuellement, nous comptons 1239 fermes, mais des fermes laitières, j'en compte 474 dans Prescott et Russell et environ 108 dans le canton de Cumberland. Mais si je regarde pour l'inspecteur de la zone B, il aura une responsabilité de faire les inspections du lait pour environ 700 fermes laitières. Je ne sais pas ou nous allons avoir un inspecteur à un salaire de 18 750 \$ par année, incluant toutes les dépenses de déplacement. Qu'est-ce qui va arriver ? Je ne sais pas.

1630

Nous avons dans Prescott et Russell, comme j'ai dit, un montant d'au-delà de 700 fermes laitières qui embauchent 588 personnes par année pour un montant de vente de 150 \$ millions annuellement, ce qui veut dire que c'est très, très important que le gouvernement passe le plus tôt possible ce projet de loi parce que c'est un projet de loi dont la profession est une des plus importantes dans cette province. Dans Prescott et Russell seulement, incluant Cumberland, et si j'inclus maintenant Glengarry, qui va

faire partie de la circonscription de Prescott et Russell aux prochaines élections, nous allons compter au-delà de 900 fermes laitières. Dans notre circonscription, on a même une ferme qui a 3500 acres. Donc, ce ne sont pas de petits montants d'argent qu'on joue avec.

Lorsqu'on regarde les autres inspecteurs, ils ont tous été appointés, mais espérons qu'ils vont être là pour le temps que nous allons passer la troisième lecture. Nous ne voulons pas retarder cette lecture. Nous aurions voulu que cette troisième lecture soit passée avant la présentation du projet de loi, qui était le 4 décembre dernier.

C'est ici la première partie, frais d'utilisateur. Lorsque nous regardons les pertes de revenus que les municipalités vont avoir depuis l'annonce du mega-week, l'annonce du 13 janvier 1997, en Ontario, les municipalités vont perdre 91 \$ millions de revenus. Il est vrai que nous avons le fonds de transition, que l'on appelle, mais où allons-nous aller chercher ces montants ? Dans Prescott et Russell, nous allons perdre des revenus de 1,4 \$ millions. Les agriculteurs, ne soyez pas trop enchantés du 300 000 \$ à la date qu'on mentionne que nous allons voir : 300 000 piastres pour toute la province, pour 16 inspecteurs, c'est des «peanuts», parce que les municipalités auront certainement, à partir du 1^{er} janvier, les outils nécessaires pour aller récupérer ces montants d'argent qu'on a déjà perdus. La province a un budget de 54 \$ milliards par année. Le budget de l'agriculture est seulement de 420 \$ millions. Depuis deux ans, nous avons perdu dans le budget de l'agriculture 12 %, ce qui veut dire dans le total, la partie de l'enveloppe totale du budget de la province, le budget de l'agriculture ne représente que 0,5 %.

Donc, il ne faut pas se leurrer. Il ne faut pas dire que les agriculteurs sont gâtés, qu'ils reçoivent plus qu'ailleurs, parce que, encore une fois, ce sont eux, les agriculteurs, qui nous donnent la nourriture que nous mangeons tous les jours. Sans eux, il serait impossible de vivre.

Mon ami de Yorkview a dit tout à l'heure qu'il avait eu une expérience — il est natif d'une ferme en Italie — mais il a vécu ce que nous avons vécu, que nos parents ont vécu. Il a dû faire la traite manuellement dans ce temps-là, à l'ancienne, la coupure du blé et du foin avec la faux, mais il a vraiment passé par les temps durs. Donc, il sait aujourd'hui, lorsqu'un agriculteur parle des temps durs qu'on doit passer de temps à autre, que c'est très difficile. Les dépenses capitales seulement pour le comté de Prescott et Russell, la circonscription, s'élèvent à tout près de un milliard de dollars. Donc, c'est vraiment tout une industrie lorsqu'on regarde 588 employés, excluant les propriétaires de fermes qui doivent s'occuper de l'agriculture eux-mêmes. Donc, c'est toute une industrie pour Prescott et Russell et, je dirais, pour la province. On ne l'appelle pas peut-être numéro un, mais définitivement l'agriculture devrait être classée l'industrie numéro un en Ontario.

Je crois que j'ai couvert la partie que je voulais couvrir. Espérons que l'inspecteur qui sera choisi pour la zone B sera bilingue, parce que lorsqu'on regarde aujourd'hui,

nous allons encore peut-être revenir avec la Loi 108. Nous voulons complètement, graduellement partir des parties de la Loi 8 qui donnent des pouvoirs aux francophones en Ontario.

Encore une fois, cette partie-là, je crois que le ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales, qui est aussi responsable des Affaires francophones, va prendre ce point en considération en s'assurant que les inspecteurs appointés dans la région de l'est, aussi bien que dans le nord de l'Ontario, puissent vraiment s'exprimer dans les deux langues officielles ici-même en Ontario aussi bien qu'au Canada.

Je dois terminer sur cette note en disant joyeux Noël à tous et bonne et heureuse année à tous les membres de cette Assemblée législative et à leur famille.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate? The member for Yorkview. Well, no: questions and comments.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: Stop the clock a minute until I clarify what's happening. I wasn't in the chair. The Liberals had shared the debate time. Are we now into questions and comments? Okay. Questions and comments; the member for Yorkview.

Mr Sergio: I have to compliment the members for Essex-Kent and Prescott and Russell. I am sure the minister was listening very carefully —

Interjection.

Mr Sergio: En français, certainment — to the voice of experience, the voice of knowledge as to the life of farmers and dairy farmers in general.

I would hope that some of the members' comments addressing the issue would find some place on the side of the government. They pointed out to the government and to the minister the effect the cuts are bringing about, especially to the small farmers.

Interjection: Eighty-one million dollars.

Mr Sergio: Not only the \$81 million and the \$300 million that have been affecting the program, but we have to take into consideration — and I'm sure the minister knows it very well. Knowing how well respected he is in the farming community, he must be taking hard the concerns of the farmers, especially the small farmers.

Now, with all the pressure brought upon them with respect to the quality of inspections, quality of inspectors themselves — many small municipalities don't have qualified inspectors to do exactly that on a regular, consistent basis. The minister must be seriously concerned that the milk and all the other dairy products and everything else that comes from our farmers is of the highest quality, that it is kept in that particular consistency, not only for our own local use but also to maintain the standards throughout Ontario and throughout the farming community.

Again I congratulate the members for Essex-Kent and Prescott and Russell.

The Deputy Speaker: Further questions and comments? The member can sum up.

Mr Hoy: I appreciate the comments from the member for Yorkview. We will of course, as I mentioned, support

Bill 170. I gave my reasons and the fact that the dairy farmers are all ready to move on January 1. It's unfortunate that this legislation had to be put in place at this late date during an extended House sitting that the government had to put in place for this week to deal with its government business.

Their handling of the agricultural agenda has been very lax. Bill 146 was just dealt with last night and will go to committee. I know that the Dairy Farmers of Ontario were here last week one evening to hear this bill debated in the House, and the government didn't bring it forth. Seven months have passed from the time an agreement in principle was made to bringing it here to this House.

I want to inform members about the fine dairy farms we have in Essex-Kent. We don't have a great presence of dairy. There's been a change in the way people farm in Essex-Kent. We only have nine producers in Kent county and only 28 in Essex, but I want to tell you, they are among the finest, as are all those other dairy farmers throughout Ontario, those 7,500 or so who work here in Ontario.

The dairy farm that I can see from my home just down the road is an immaculate place. If there was an award — maybe the new municipality of Chatham-Kent would like to give the Jansen family an award for what is the most immaculate-looking livestock dairy farm I've seen.

1640

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Wildman: I rise to intervene briefly in the debate on third reading on Bill 170 to say that our caucus is in support of this legislation. We have some concerns about the process, but we are prepared to facilitate the passage of the bill this afternoon.

I would point out that we are in an extended session of the House. According to the normal calendar of the Legislature, the House should have adjourned last Thursday, but here we are, seven days later, debating a bill that was only recently brought forward for second reading by the minister, despite the fact that this was announced some time ago and there have been discussions with the Dairy Farmers of Ontario for some time about the transfer of the inspection responsibilities.

I don't understand why the government waits so long to introduce pieces of legislation, particularly as they relate to the agricultural community. You would think if the government put this as a high priority it would have introduced this bill a long time ago and would have been able to pass it.

We had the rather interesting situation where the minister, in his lead-off remarks on third reading, acted as if somehow members of the opposition, and in particular members of our caucus, were in opposition to this legislation. He makes it rather difficult to support him at times. The minister got up and criticized our caucus for actions taken by our government when we were in government, by saying that we had cut the number of milk inspectors and therefore we were subject to criticism. As other members have pointed out, it's a bit much for the minister to be criticizing the former New Democratic

Party government for cutting the number of inspectors when he's getting out of the business altogether.

Talk about having it both ways. On the one hand he says, "The previous government cut the number of inspectors so that's a bad thing, but I'm getting rid of all of the government inspectors and that's a good thing." It's a little bit much. The fact is that we are negotiating an agreement with the Dairy Farmers of Ontario which will make it possible for them to carry out, on a contract, the inspection of raw milk and to ensure the good quality of the product so that we can ensure that their needs are met while at the same time the marketability of a very important product in our economy is maintained and enhanced.

As I understand it, there are approximately 12 inspectors now. About five or six of those will actually be hired by the Dairy Farmers of Ontario and the others, as I understand it, will be offered other positions within the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. That means there will be a transfer of expertise in this contract, and that's a good thing.

I also understand that the Dairy Farmers of Ontario, in their contract, will actually increase the number of inspectors in total, up to 15, which is a good thing, and I support that.

I also understand that the ministry is going to provide \$300,000 for four years to help the Dairy Farmers of Ontario get the contract up and running and ensure they have the infrastructure required to meet their obligations and to protect the quality of milk in Ontario. That's a good thing.

I am a little worried, though, about what happens after four years. I know that farmers have paid a fee and will be paying fees, but what will happen? Will the fees go up substantially after the provincial government funding is cut or no longer is there? Will it be extended? I somehow doubt it if this government remains in power.

The other thing I'm particularly worried about is that after the term of this contract is completed, will this then be up for tender and for bid to anybody, not just the Dairy Farmers of Ontario but also perhaps private contractors who might like to get involved in the contract? If we do that, how can we ensure that good services are maintained? How can we ensure that the good wages are maintained, the expertise is not lost and that people's jobs are protected, as well as ensuring that good, proper inspections occur?

I hope that the minister and the ministry will be able to answer those questions that were put at second reading, I think, by my leader so that we can rest assured that the quality of raw milk going to the dairies from the Dairy Farmers of Ontario will remain the high quality it is now, for which it is renowned, and to ensure that the market will be protected.

I support the legislation. My caucus supports it. We regret that the government took so long to bring this matter before the House. I'm happy to say that all three parties and all three House leaders have cooperated to ensure that this matter is debated before the session is

ended. Those members of the House who understand the process around here will understand that that took some compromise on all parts.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments? Further debate?

Mr Villeneuve has moved third reading of Bill 170. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

House in committee of the whole.

STREAMLINING OF ADMINISTRATION OF PROVINCIAL OFFENCES ACT, 1997

LOI DE 1997 SIMPLIFIANT L'ADMINISTRATION EN CE QUI A TRAIT AUX INFRACTIONS PROVINCIALES

Consideration of Bill 108, An Act to deal with the prosecution of certain provincial offences, to reduce duplication and to streamline administration / Projet de loi 108, Loi traitant des poursuites concernant certaines infractions provinciales, réduisant le double emploi et simplifiant l'administration.

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): Madam Chair, as you know, this bill had considerable debate in committee of the whole House two evenings ago for approximately two and a quarter hours on one amendment to section 1. The same amendment was put forward in the standing committee before the bill arrived in the House for committee of the whole House. I therefore move that the question now be put on this amendment.

1650

The Chair (Ms Marilyn Churley): I don't find that there has been enough time on this amendment yet, so we shall proceed. Minister, you have the floor.

Hon Mr Sterling: Madam Chair, I did not understand that the option was there with regard to a motion within committee to make that determination. However, I guess that's the way it is. Therefore, Madam Chair, if we're not able to move on with this particular matter and there is an indication by the other parties that they would prefer to continue to drag this on and not be able to get this passed this day — that is my understanding — I move that the committee rise and report progress and beg leave to report again.

The Chair: Shall the motion carry? Carried.

I do now leave the committee chair, and the House will resume.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): The committee of the whole House begs to report progress and asks for leave to sit again. Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

SUPPLY ACT, 1997

LOI DE CRÉDITS DE 1997

Mr Sterling, on behalf of Mr Eves, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 175, An Act to authorize the payment of certain amounts for the Public Service for the fiscal year ending on March 31, 1998 / Projet de loi 175, Loi autorisant le paiement de certaines sommes destinées à la fonction publique pour l'exercice se terminant le 31 mars 1998.

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): As you know, this an act to authorize payment of amounts which are required by us as a government for salaries, for things that are purchased by the government. It is a fairly straightforward bill which is introduced each year and is necessary under our parliamentary procedure to gain the approval of the Legislature in the form of legislation.

I hope all members will support this bill so the government can function in an orderly manner and pay the debts it has incurred, both to people who supply goods and services to the government, but also to its employees.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Further debate?

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): Madam Speaker, it is our intention to wrap up debate on this bill, and we would split the time between our party and the NDP. We will undertake to finish at 5:15, which I think is 20 minutes; furthermore, we will be splitting the time. With that, I will try to move very quickly into what I wanted to cover so I leave some time for my colleagues.

The Deputy Speaker: Is there consent to split the time? Agreed.

Mr Phillips: Just to put everyone's mind at ease, of course the government will get supply. It's important, obviously, that we give the authority to manage our bills.

While the government may feel that the tough sledding is behind them, I will just say that in my opinion the easy stuff has been done by the government. As difficult as that may be for some of the members opposite to believe, it is always easy to tear things down, and the government has essentially dismantled most of our major institutions of the province, by their own admission. The education system is fundamentally changed. The members shake their heads, but it's fundamentally changed. Mike Harris is now in complete control. There's no question of that. On Monday, the government will set the budgets for all the school boards. There is no question that Mike Harris now is in total control of the education system. He will now be held accountable for his promise for smaller classes and improved quality. He and he alone has done that.

Mr Tom Froese (St Catharines-Brock): Finally.

Mr Phillips: Yes. He wants that; he's got that. Now the tough part begins for him. He wanted to dump costs on to the property taxes. Nobody thinks it's right to put social housing and social assistance on the property tax — nobody. It is fundamentally wrong. Ontario will rue the day that happened.

On December 23, almost exactly a year ago, Dave Crombie wrote a desperate letter to Al Leach. Dave Crombie held an emergency meeting of the Who Does What group, handpicked, by the way, by Mike Harris. Mike Harris personally selected those 14 people. Dave Crombie, when he heard there was a plan afoot to put social housing and social assistance on property tax, called that group together in an emergency meeting, and on December 23 sent a letter to Al Leach saying: "We are strongly opposed to it. We are unanimous in the view that it's wrong." I remember it like it was yesterday, because Al Leach let Dave Crombie have a press conference on December 30, the day before New Year's, at 3:30 in the afternoon, to try and hide from the public that the government's own panel, selected to advise them, was advising them desperately, "Don't do," what the government proceeded to do.

We finally saw, a week ago, on Friday, the results of it all: over \$500 million of new cost loaded on to the property taxpayer. I remember that Al Leach just a few months ago said, and I assume he still says it, "I expect property taxes in the province to go down 5% to 10%." He's in a different world if he doesn't understand that the cities and the towns across this province have been going through years and years and years of restraint. I find it almost laughable that Al Leach said: "All they've got to do is simply cut \$500 million out. That's all we're asking them to do." Then he goes on with the most insulting thing: "And if they can't do that, they should go and get another job."

Well, get real. Our mayors and our councillors have not been wasting money. Every one of them have pored over their budgets for years, line by line. But Al Leach said, just with the stroke of a pen, "No, they can find \$500 million." Then he goes on to insult them by saying if they can't do that, they should go out and get another job. Finally, the government came clean last Friday. They admitted it was at least \$500 million — and by the way, two years from now another \$75 million gets added on, so it's close to \$600 million of new costs.

That's the second thing Mike Harris is going to be held accountable for. He said property taxes would go down and services up. Our mayors and our reeves and our wardens across this province are incredulous. They do not understand where this government's coming from.

1700

The third area I wanted to talk briefly about is the new property tax system. You don't have to rely on my comments. The clerks and treasurers across the province of Ontario, our most senior municipal civil servants, have been sending the government desperate letters saying, "The property tax system is a mess." They use very strong language in their comments. As respected bureaucrats they choose their language carefully, but they couldn't be stronger in sending our warnings. They say: "The new system will be immensely complicated." "Implementation on January 1, 1998, is a high-risk strategy for the financial health of the municipal sector." "This will create serious problems." "This is a recipe for administrative

chaos." "This is downloading the government's confusion and indecision to the municipalities."

The government has simply refused to listen, and I say it will only be a matter of days before you begin to see the impact of this.

The elimination of the business occupancy tax is going to benefit large business and it's going to hurt small business. There's no question of that. In the next few days, Mike Harris is going to announce a tax rate. Mike Harris now sets, for our businesses, over half of their property taxes. It's no longer done locally; it is Mike Harris who will set in the next few days over half of all our businesses' property taxes. Where will he do it? He'll do it behind closed doors with no debate. None of our businesses will have any input.

I think something's gone wrong here. I happen to think that the government announced a single, uniform mill rate on residences and now have boxed themselves in. They can't move now. They have only one choice, and that is that across this province there are going to be dramatic differences in the educational tax rate paid by our businesses. You'll have a business on one side of the street paying a dramatically different tax rate than a business on the other side of it. In spite of the fact that Mike Harris sets the rates, Mike Harris now controls it, Mike Harris said that no matter where you live you'll pay the same rate, now it looks like no matter where your business is you'll pay a completely different rate.

Again I'm on the theme that the hard work now begins for Mike Harris. In my opinion and in the opinion, perhaps more importantly, of our senior bureaucrats, the property tax system is a mess.

I wanted to talk briefly about jobs. We get into a constant debate in here around the job front, what numbers are right and what numbers are wrong. Let me take the government's document; this comes straight from the Minister of Finance. Mike Harris was elected in June 1995. There were 499,000 people at that time out of work. Today, there are 502,000 people out of work. Almost halfway through the Mike Harris regime, more people in Ontario are out of work than the day he became Premier. The document goes on to show, and this is one of the real tragedies in these numbers, a 17% unemployment rate among our young people so far in 1997; almost completely through the year, 17%.

As I wrap up my comments on the government's bill to secure the financing to pay its bills, I just want to say that personally I am very worried about the future of our province. I live in the new city of Toronto and I'm particularly worried about the new city of Toronto. I think Mike Harris is killing the new city of Toronto. Unfortunately, when they announce the funding for education, when we see that our business taxes are still on our businesses for education, when we see the \$163 million download and we see all the challenges of the new city, I think we have strangled the new city.

"Despair" is perhaps too strong a word, but he's torn apart the education system, our municipal structures, our health care system, our property tax system, and now, in

my opinion, the plans to put them back together again are fatally flawed.

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough North): I have just been given the privilege of speaking on this, which is important to us, especially my area.

What does the government want? The government wants the tools to do its job, I heard the government needs this money to pay the bills. It's a good idea. It's important. But this government has deprived many other people of the money to pay their bills, and they should remember this.

Let me tell you about the bills to be paid by other people this government has deprived. They deprived 22% of the income of the most vulnerable people in our society when they came into office, so they will be unable to pay their bills. For those receiving support in their welfare cheques it's a reduction of 22%. They can't pay their rent, they can't buy food, they're unable even to afford transportation. They need their money to pay their bills.

Let me tell you about some others. They eliminated rent control, therefore making prisoners of tenants in their own accommodation, because when they move they'll be paying more. They deprived them of their money to pay their bills.

When they're asking for money, let's consider others too: the students, who will see this government increasing tuition fees to 40% by the time they're through with them, and not only that, but also giving permission to the colleges and universities to increase activity fees, depriving them of the ability to pay their bills. The government need their money to pay its bills.

I'm just wondering if they understand the burden and hardship they place on those people. The government needs their money to pay its bills.

Look at the downloading and the cost they are putting on municipalities, not only \$163 million but putting again another \$150 million they'll have to find, saying to them to pay their bills now. How would they like that, to be told now that you have far less to pay your bills?

We know the burden and all the upset you have put to the other people in our society, the police and the fire, through the disruption they have done, who are finding it more difficult to pay their bills.

They come at the last day, at the last moment, and ask us to give them that support, which we will. We will give them the support in order to pay the civil servants and those who are carrying out their work.

They've upset this whole province. As they go out this Christmas and say Merry Christmas to people, there are people who aren't feeling merry about that. They're not feeling one bit merry about the hardship this government has placed on people in society. It's Merry Christmas, when the minister previously said, when they said they could not afford their rent, to go out and buy tuna. That's Merry Christmas to many of those who have said to us that times are more difficult. The people will not forget what hardship this government has placed on the people of this province.

Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Prescott and Russell): Just before we approve this bill, I thought of coming up with some comments. This government is dumping everything on the Ontario taxpayer, especially when we look at the downloading. Even though we had an announcement on a community reinvestment fund last week, Prescott and Russell is going to be hit hard. The shortfall will be over \$24 million.

Why am I saying that? I don't think the Minister of Finance is fair with the people. We lost the municipal support grant. Even though it was announced in 1995, it will happen in 1998. We have to add up another 6% of cutting that the municipality will have to do. At the present time, they made up the figure of 1.7% of spending cuts that we have to do, but the figure we are going to be short by is \$24,465,000. It's easy to play with those figures at the present time.

I look at the transition fund. In the year 2000, the people are going to be looking at probably a 20%, 25% tax increase, so the government has to take that into the calculation, even though they are saying it's only a 1.7% tax increase. It is not true. I've always said those figures are only figures that were put on paper. We never took time to do the research and see how much extra it is going to cost the taxpayers of this province.

1710

Mr Mike Colle (Oakwood): I know the government likes to pat itself on the back and say what a perfect job it's doing. Certainly in my riding it's not doing a very perfect job. This government has closed our hospital — Northwestern hospital on Keele Street, a new hospital built 25 years ago. It's been shut: no emergency, no beds open, totally shut. On top of that, Branson Hospital now has no emergency service at night.

This is what this government has done with its indiscriminate, reckless cutting. Sure, the tax cut is a great reward to their friends, but ordinary people now are without hospital care. Home care: You can't get home care — backed up, not available. Jobs: There are as many young people out of work today as there were last year and the year before. They're doing nothing about jobs, especially for the young. There are more people searching for opportunities to go to university. Now they're going to raise tuition fees by 20%.

This is the legacy of this government's lack of foresight, lack of vision. They are stuck in the age of the 1920s, the Hoover approach to economics. It's Hooverism at its worst. They are Neanderthal in their attitude towards the new economy. They won't do anything different. All they want to do is cut. All they want to do is get rid of people who want an opportunity. Look what they're doing to education. Anywhere from 4,000 to 7,000 teachers are going to lose their jobs because this government thinks that education is just another line item on a budget. Young people are going to suffer even more as teachers are taken out of the classroom, but they will still be able to reward their friends with that mammoth tax cut.

Then the property taxpayers all across Ontario got dumped on this week by another \$500 million-plus, none

worse than the taxpayers of Metropolitan Toronto, where this government broke its promise about making it revenue-neutral. We've heard this government say "revenue-neutral" so many times. Now they're saying: "You're going to have to borrow, you're going to have to go into debt. We didn't really mean revenue-neutral. We mean another \$200 million, another \$100 million, another \$5 million." So mayors and councillors and property taxpayers in every city in Ontario are concerned about the downloading, because what this government has done, very shrewdly, is that it's passed its responsibilities down to property taxpayers.

Then on top of that, half of the property tax is going to be set by Premier Harris. The Harris property tax will be done behind closed doors without debate. The taxpayers will never be able to question that tax rate that Mike Harris is going to impose. In fact, the minister is going to set the per pupil grants over the Christmas holidays when he hopes nobody is watching, because in Metro we know that this government is hell-bent on taking up to \$1,500 per student away from the schools in Metro.

That's what this government is planning and that's why it doesn't have the fortitude to make the announcements while the House is in session. This government doesn't want the scrutiny, doesn't want to be questioned. This government basically has established an executive regime that feels the backroom whiz kids know it all and they just salute the backroom whiz kids. Therefore, the public or the members of the opposition have no room or no right to question the backroom whiz kids. That's why they're making these reckless mistakes. That's why we get six different sets of figures about downloading, because the whiz kids never had to pay a mortgage or raise a family, because the whiz kids live in ya-ya land and they don't understand the real needs of real Ontarians. So shame on the whiz kids, shame on Mike Harris, for following their orders.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): I'm very pleased to have an opportunity to take part in this. I want to begin my comments by referring to something which was in the Toronto Star today. This is the new Ontario. This is the Mike Harris Ontario. The headline is, "Churches Strive to Cover Slashed Social Services." Then the subtitle is, "Handling High Demand is Tough, Leaders Say." "Low Income People...Feel Abandoned by the Rest of Society." These are the headlines in the new Mike Harris Ontario. That's part of what I want to explore here.

I want to explore, for example, what's happening on the environmental front, what's happening on the natural resources front, what's happening with respect to children, what's happening with respect to long-term investments in education, what's happening in terms of other important community services, whether they're ambulance services or public health services, whatever.

This headline says a lot of it. I think you could duplicate this headline in five or six different areas: Churches are being asked to fill the role of looking after people that this government has abandoned. I just want to read the first paragraph of this:

"The slashing of social services by the province is forcing churches to take up the slack, and they're ill-equipped to do so, say church leaders.

"There is no way we alone can make up for the government cuts," said Bishop Henry of Thunder Bay, chair of social affairs with the Ontario Conference of Catholic Bishops." That's his comment on what's happening.

The Harris Conservative government wants to say to everyone that they have dealt with the deficit. That's the line they want to take, that they have dealt with the deficit. Unfortunately, they only talk about one deficit, a financial deficit. Yes, it's true that over the last three and a half years some headway has been made on dealing with the financial deficit. It's true that if the North American economy continues to grow, particularly if the American economy continues to boom, we'll have continuing opportunities to reduce the deficit here. If the federal government is intelligent about it and finds a way to keep interest costs low such that there is investment in housing and investment in the more expensive consumer goods, we'll continue to have extra tax revenue from that.

I want to talk about the deficits this government is creating. What Bishop Henry and the church leaders are referring to is a social deficit that is being created, a deficit whereby this government is literally writing off the lives and the opportunity and the future of not just thousands but literally hundreds of thousands of people in this province. In a city like Toronto you can see those people if you walk on any of the streets, people who have literally been forced out on the street to try to survive there. They are the homeless; they are the people who have to go to food banks to find food; they are the people who have to try to find a bed in a hostel in order to at least once in a while have a bed to sleep in. These are not just adults. In many cases these are children. Children are among the hundreds of thousands who are literally being written off by this government.

I want to talk a bit about the health care deficit that we're starting to see, because there is truly a health care deficit. You can see it in a number of places. You can see it in terms of people who need an acute-care bed but can't get one. You can see that health care deficit in terms of people who are struggling to find a long-term-care bed and can't get one. Or you can see it in terms of people who have been told the service is no longer available in the hospital and you have to get the service through home care; they go to home care, or what the government calls continuing care access centres, and they're told: "We can provide you with four hours of nursing, but beyond that you'll have to hire a private nurse. You'll have to do it privately."

I would say to the government that in a lot of communities that deficit is going to become very evident in the next short while. The extent to which you are privatizing health care by the back door in this province is going to become very evident.

What does it mean in the longer term? Let's look at home care and let's look at long-term care. If people aren't able to get those home care services, if they don't have the wallet to go out and buy them privately,

inevitably they end up in an acute care bed, where the cost to the system is \$700 a day or more. The system becomes unbalanced and you start to create real deficits there, deficits in terms of people who can't get the care they want or deficits in terms of expenditure made because the alternative services which are more appropriate aren't there.

1720

The real danger, though, in terms of a health care deficit with this government comes principally with public health, because what you're doing by downloading public health on to municipalities is essentially saying that public health isn't important in this province any more; that prevention of illness, that prevention of disease, that wellness promotion and that health education are not a priority.

Any health economist will tell you over and over again that the least expensive, most efficient, optimum approach to health care is at the front end in terms of wellness promotion and disease prevention. But that's exactly what you're writing off and writing down.

What does it mean? What are the ingredients? One of the ingredients is, for example, clean water. It is part of your strategy to inevitably say to municipalities: "If you can't afford to run your water system any more because you don't have the revenue and you can't raise property taxes high enough, then sell it off. Sell it off to a private operator."

What has happened where that's been done before? Great Britain is a perfect example. In Great Britain, under Thatcher, water services were privatized. Today, clean water is the number one public health problem in Great Britain. The British Medical Association regularly writes to the government saying, "We've got to do something about the quality and the safety of drinking water in Great Britain because it's causing all kinds of illnesses, all kinds of disease that cost the health care system all kinds of money," but more than that, costs society in terms of lost production, in terms of not having a healthy workforce, with is the prerequisite of having a productive workforce.

To take it a bit further, if you're not going to invest the money at the front end in terms of health education, in terms of getting young people not to smoke, in terms of the proper approach to alcohol and drug education, those kinds of problems are going to multiply, and they are multiplying out there. They are going to cost, down the road, a lot more money and you're or future governments are going to be faced with the decision to either increase health care expenditures dramatically or privatize more chunks of the health care system, which is not going to solve it. It merely slows down the developing health care deficit.

I want to talk just a bit about the deficit on the environmental front that's starting to develop.

The government and the Minister of the Environment don't much like to talk about the Plastimet fire in Hamilton, and for good reason they don't want to talk much about it. The reality is, given the cuts, given what has happened to the Ministry of the Environment, what happened in Hamilton could essentially happen in any

community in this province now. It could happen with a pulp and paper mill. It could happen with a chemical factory. It could happen with a tire factory. It could happen with a steel mill. It could happen with literally any of dozens of kinds of processing plants, because the reality is that there are not the inspectors out there any longer, there are not the monitoring officials out there any longer and there are not the enforcement officials out there any longer. As a government, what you've essentially said to industry is: "You police yourself. You monitor yourself."

Some companies will do that job. They will. They will say that in the interests of being well positioned for future developments in society and future developments in the marketplace, they will pay attention to those details. But other companies will not. Other companies will say: "Hey, there's an opportunity here to make some quick money on the bottom line. We're not going to worry about environmental safety. We're not going to worry about public health. We're not going to pay that much attention to whether the processes we are using meet or exceed standards."

What we saw in Hamilton with Plastimet could happen in literally any other community in this province, and it will happen. It's just a matter of time before we have another Plastimet situation in this province. You cannot cut the heart and soul out of the enforcement branch in the Ministry of the Environment, you cannot lay off the number of scientists and technologists who have been laid off, and continue to have society meet the environmental standards that are necessary in the kind of economy we now function in. You're creating an environmental deficit, a deficit that after you've created it is going to take a lot more money to clean up and to remedy the situation once you've let things dwindle down.

I want to talk just a bit further about another aspect of the environmental deficit. It has to do with how we look after our natural resources. Pick any natural resources office you want in this province. If you were to go to them, you would be very hard-pressed to find people in those offices who know what's happening out there in the forest. You'd be very hard-pressed to find biologists or to find forest technologists or wildlife technologists or fisheries technologists who have any idea what's happening out there. If you talk to them personally and ask them why, they'll tell you why. They'll be very direct about it. They'll simply say: "Look, there are too many jobs here and too few people. We simply can't keep track of this. We don't have enough time to get out in the field and do field inspections. We don't have the time to respond to all the requests that are made, so we spend our time now keeping our heads down and trying to cool out the most critical situations."

That's not the way to work in a modern natural resources environment. That's not the way to look after your forest resources, it's not the way to look after your wildlife resources, it's not the way to look after your fishery resources.

As a government, you say: "All of that's been handed over to the industry. The industry is doing that work now." I invite every member of the government to go out there

and look at what's actually happening. You will find some companies that operate in the forest industry that have clearly looked down the road and have said to themselves: "We don't want to have any environmental crises on our hands. We don't want to have any environmental controversies on our hands." So they are companies that choose to invest in foresters, invest in the biologists, invest in the fisheries technologists, and they do a good job. I wish that were the case across the field, but it's not. Instead, what you have are other companies that again make the quick financial calculation and say to themselves, "Gee, if we cut corners on the forestry aspect, if we cut corners on the wildlife aspect, if we cut corners on the fisheries aspect, we can improve our bottom line. We can have a better bottom line. We'll take the risk."

The Deputy Speaker: Could I ask members of the House to come to order. The din is getting too loud in here. I'm having trouble hearing the leader of the third party.

Mr Hampton: What we saw happen at Plastimet in terms of a company that was clearly running outside the rules we're going to see over and over again in the natural resources sector too. We are going to see companies — they're already out there and MNR staff already know who they are — that are ignoring the rules, breaking the rules, and are taking the attitude, "We'll put up with the fine or we'll put up with the potential of an investigation and the potential of a charge because in the short term we can make more money doing it this way."

I simply make the point that after you've let all this run down, it's going to take a considerable effort and it's going to take some money to build up that natural resources deficit that is starting to occur out there.

1730

In the last few minutes, though, I want to talk about children. I want to talk about the deficit that's being created with respect to children.

The irony of this government saying that they want to invest in education, want to invest in the future of children, when by the end of this fiscal year they will have cut \$1.7 billion out of our schools, \$1.7 billion, and very soon they will begin laying off teachers. It will start with about 4,000 and it will quickly jump to double that. The irony is that you've got a government that believes you can improve education by laying off teachers, a government that believes you can improve education by taking \$1.7 billion out of the system. If this sounds a bit like doublespeak, if it sounds a bit, in Orwell's terms, like Newspeak, that's exactly what it is. It is a complete and utter contradiction. But that is in fact what your record is going to be.

What's going to happen out of this? I suspect that our schools are quickly going to look like schools in Edmonton. If you come from a wealthy neighbourhood or if you've got access to corporate cash, you'll be able to fund your schools by doing fund-raising and finding the extras. But if you come from a neighbourhood that's less than affluent with less than affluent families and you don't have access to corporate cash, then I think you're going to

see schools that start to crack and schools that start to show the effects.

We are going to have very quickly not just two tiers of education, not just two tiers of investment in children, but I think it will start to be multi-tiered, and kids are going to suffer. Some kids are clearly not going to get the investment, are clearly not going to get the care, the attention that other kids will get. They're going to fall behind and it will be noticeable.

I want to take it a bit further in that discussion about children. It's not lost on people that there are more and more children turning up at food banks. It's not lost on people that there are more and more children on the lists of family and children's services. It is not lost on the public out there that there are more children living in poverty in this province today than ever before. While this government brags about its tax cut for the wealthy, there are more children living in poverty in this province than ever before, than ever in the past.

The government says, "We brought down the financial deficit a bit." I ask the question: Is it worth it in terms of the environmental deficit that's being created? Is it worth it in terms of the social deficit that's being created? Is it worth it in terms of the deficit for children? Is it worth it? I don't think it is.

But I also want people to add in the third element. The third element is the tax cut for the wealthiest people in this province. You're creating a social deficit, you're creating an environmental deficit, you're creating an education deficit, and most of all you're creating a deficit for children and why is it all happening? So you can give your \$5-billion tax gift to the wealthiest people in this province.

Some people believe that you're going too far, too fast. I don't believe it's a case of too far, too fast. I believe you've simply made the wrong choices, absolutely the wrong choices. The challenge now is to show that they were the wrong choices.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Mr Sterling moved third reading of Bill 175. Is it the pleasure of the house that the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. I declare the motion carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Hon Margaret Marland (Minister without Portfolio [children's issues]): Mr Speaker, I have had the privilege of doing this every Christmas in this House for the last 12 years. It is something that means a great deal to all of us in terms of this season, the very atmosphere in the House, the fact that we're able to finally succeed in being together.

I would like to use this opportunity to thank those staff whom we don't have an opportunity to thank publicly, who serve us all year round. I particularly want to mention the table staff, our security staff, our translators, our Hansard, the people who look after us in the parking lot and our cleaning staff, the people who make this place run. Not that we take them for granted, but this is an

opportunity to wish them season's greetings, and to express our appreciation on a personal basis to you, Mr Speaker, and all my colleagues in this House. I wish you all a healthy and happy new year.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-Walkerville): On a member's point of privilege, Mr Speaker: We too join in that. I'd like to inform the members of the government, however, that some of the Marriott employees from downstairs have been laid off this afternoon. Merry Christmas.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): Point of privilege, Mr Speaker: We'd like to join with my friend from Mississauga South in her comments and say that the work we do around this place is dependent on people who work as cleaners, security staff, the staff who work with us in our offices, the clerks and all the people who work with the committees and so on. I'd just like to say that we wish them all very happy holidays, a safe and very merry Christmas and new year's and we look forward to seeing them again in 1998.

The Speaker: I'm sure they're very thankful for those comments made by the members.

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Parkdale): Point of privilege, Mr Speaker: I think not only should we join in thanking everyone, but there's one person we omitted: the Speaker himself. Mr Speaker, thank you very much.

The Speaker: You forgot me. I've never known the member for Parkdale to be so in order.

Hon Mr Sterling: Mr Speaker, I believe we have unanimous consent to call orders 73 to 76, inclusive, so they can be moved and debated concurrently.

The Speaker: Agreed? Agreed.

CITY OF BRAMPTON ACT, 1997

Mr Spina moved second reading of Bill Pr89, An Act respecting the City of Brampton.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr Spina moved third reading of Bill Pr89, An Act respecting the City of Brampton.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

LONDON COMMUNITY FOUNDATION ACT, 1997

Mr Bob Wood moved second reading of Bill Pr91, An Act respecting The London Community Foundation.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr Bob Wood moved third reading of Bill Pr91, An Act respecting The London Community Foundation.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

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JAMAICAN CANADIAN ASSOCIATION ACT, 1997

Mr Sergio moved second reading of Bill Pr94, An Act respecting The Jamaican Canadian Association.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr Sergio moved third reading of Bill Pr94, An Act respecting the Jamaican Canadian Association.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

INSTITUTE FOR ADVANCED JUDAIC STUDIES ACT, 1997

Mr Caplan, on behalf of Mr Cordiano, moved second reading of Bill Pr95, An Act respecting Institute for Advanced Judaic Studies.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr Caplan, on behalf of Mr Cordiano, moved third reading of Bill Pr95, An Act respecting Institute for Advanced Judaic Studies.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

UNITED EMPIRE LOYALISTS' DAY ACT, 1997

LOI DE 1997 SUR LE JOUR DES LOYALISTES DE L'EMPIRE-UNI

Mr Danford moved third reading of Bill 150, An Act proclaiming United Empire Loyalists' Day / Projet de loi 150, Loi proclamant le jour des Loyalistes de l'Empire-Uni.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

STATUS OF BUSINESS

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): I move that, notwithstanding the prorogation of the House,

(i) the following government bills: Bill 108, An Act to deal with the prosecution of certain provincial offences, to reduce duplication and to streamline administration; and Bill 146, An Act to Protect Farming and Food Production;

(ii) the following private members' public bills: Bill 166, An Act to protect Persons from Liability in respect of Voluntary Emergency Medical or First Aid Services; and Bill 145, An Act to provide protection against pedophiles

by preventing them from working in direct contact with children;

remaining on the orders and notices paper at the prorogation of the first session of this Parliament be continued and placed on the orders and notices paper of the second sessional day of the second session of the 36th Parliament at the same stage of business for the House and its committees as at prorogation.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): I move that committees be authorized to release their reports during the recess between the first and second sessions of this Parliament by depositing a copy of any report with the Clerk of the assembly, and on the second sessional day of the second session of the 36th Parliament the Chairs of such committees shall bring any such reports before the House in accordance with the standing orders.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Hon Mr Sterling: I seek unanimous consent to move certain other motions with respect to prorogation of the House without notice.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House the motion carry? Carried.

COMMITTEE SITTINGS

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): I move that the following committees be continued and authorized to meet during the recess between the first and second sessions of the 36th Parliament, in accordance with the schedule of meeting dates agreed to by the three party whips and tabled with the Clerk of the assembly, to examine and inquire into the following matters:

Standing committee on finance and economic affairs to consider the matters relating to pre-budget consultation;

Standing committee on public accounts to consider the reports of the Provincial Auditor;

Standing committee on resources development to consider Bill 146, An Act to protect Farming and Food Production;

Standing committee on government agencies to consider intended appointments; and

With the agreement of the whips of each recognized party, the time allotted for consideration by the committees may be amended.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Is it the pleasure of the House the motion carry? Carried.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon Mr. Sterling (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): Under the unanimous

consent I'll move this motion as well: that the order of precedence for private members' public business be continued in the second session of the 36th Parliament.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Agreed? Agreed.

Hon Mr Sterling: I seek unanimous consent to go past 6 of the clock, if necessary, to complete the business of the day.

The Speaker: Agreed? Agreed.

HOLIDAY MESSAGES

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): I seek unanimous consent for a representative from each of the parties to say a few words at the closing of this session.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Do we have unanimous consent? Agreed.

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I know a few have expressed best wishes on behalf of the parties, but I thought it was an opportunity for the leaders. I think we had discussed this among the House leaders in the parties.

It's been a long session, Mr Speaker. There is no politics in this speech save to thank you, sir, in your office. You've had a significant number of rulings and I think I have added to that legacy under British parliamentary democracy of rules by which we are all governed.

My congratulations and our thanks to the Clerk and the table officers, who've had a very busy session with a lot of committees and a lot of sitting days throughout this year, of this session as well; to all the pages throughout two and a half years, really, as we prorogue, but particularly 1997, and of course the current group of pages, who have informed me that they're disappointed that they finish up here tomorrow. They can't go to school for even one last day. I've had a chat with a number of them.

To all of those, from Hansard, who make this place function in spite of all of us elected folks, we offer our congratulations, and certainly to all the members and the families and our staffs season's greeting at this time of year. We look forward to seeing you all. We don't plan to follow Ralph Klein's model of how often the House sits. On the other hand, we're hoping we won't sit quite as many days next year as we did this year.

With that, which I think will be well received by all parties, season's greetings and best wishes in the new year.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): On behalf of the official opposition, the Liberal Party, I would like to convey to all members of the Legislature our very best wishes for the holiday season and for the new year and to express as well our thanks to all those who make this production possible.

I would particularly like to thank my staff in the television studio — sorry, our staff in the television studio — who make the production of this House possible, the table officers, everyone in this building.

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Often the public see only those of us who are in the Legislature or read about those of us who are in the Legislature. They're not aware of the number of people who are significant to the operation of government and this Legislature, the many people who are staff, the many people who work in ministers' offices and individual members' offices and offices of special people in this building. We do want to thank them very much, including the pages, who throughout the year make a contribution, learn an awful lot about the Legislative Assembly. It's a wonderful experience for the pages to be with us and we do appreciate them.

There are even members of the news media we would want to wish the very best to as well at this time. I would like to convey on behalf of all members our affection for the members of the news media, who always provide very objective and comprehensive and outstanding journalism, whether they're in the print or electronic media.

So to all it is a message of goodwill. In regard to the Premier's suggestion the House would not sit as long, I'd be delighted, if he wishes, to have the House come back in early January to be present, as I'm sure all of us would.

To the Speaker: I would like particularly to take note of the fact that the Speaker has particularly done, on many occasions, an outstanding job and I have agreed with many of the rulings he has made. I promised earlier today, in return for getting on with a petition, that I would not mention all the rulings. I thank the Speaker very much, and all members of the House.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): In addition to what I said earlier, I want to extend sincere good wishes to all members of the assembly for a happy holiday season, a happy Hanukkah, a merry Christmas and a happy new year.

This is a time for family and a time for reflection over the last year and looking forward to 1998. I hope that everyone gets a good rest and comes back ready for a good fight in the spring, the sooner the better.

I want to express, along with the thanks I expressed earlier to all who work to make this place operate, my appreciation to the media.

I want especially, though, to thank the cleaners who are going to have to pick up some paper in the near future, I think more paper than normal in this place.

I want to say, contrary to what I said earlier, Speaker, I do very much appreciate the work that you and your deputies do to ensure that we have some greater civility in this place than we might otherwise have had without your intervention from time to time. I wish that everyone has time to enjoy the holiday, enjoy family and friends. We look forward to seeing you back here in 1998.

The Speaker: Just quickly, speaking on behalf of the staff and the members of the Legislative Assembly, we want to wish every member in the House a merry Christmas. It's a very difficult period of time and I must say to each and every member I think you've handled yourselves very well. I've seen other Parliaments and the difficulties they've got in, and not one person did I see

cross the floor in any physical rage. I think that's saying something, I must admit, considering the difficulties.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Selective amnesia is the term, actually. I want to wish you all a merry Christmas.

ROYAL ASSENT

SANCTION ROYALE

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): Mr Speaker, Her Honour awaits.

Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor of Ontario entered the chamber of the Legislative Assembly and took her seat upon the throne.

Hon Hilary M. Weston (Lieutenant Governor): Pray be seated.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): May it please Your Honour, the Legislative Assembly of the province has, at its present meetings thereof, passed certain bills to which, in the name of and on behalf of the said Legislative Assembly, I respectfully request Your Honour's assent.

Clerk Assistant (Ms Deborah Deller): The following are the titles of the bills to which Your Honour's assent is prayed:

Bill 63, An Act to simplify government processes and to improve efficiency in the Ministry of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation / *Projet de loi 63, Loi visant à simplifier les processus gouvernementaux et à améliorer l'efficacité au ministère des Affaires civiles, de la Culture et des Loisirs*

Bill 64, An Act to simplify government processes and to improve efficiency in the Ministry of Consumer and Commercial Relations / *Projet de loi 64, Loi visant à simplifier les processus gouvernementaux et à améliorer l'efficacité au ministère de la Consommation et du Commerce*

Bill 65, An Act to simplify government processes and to improve efficiency in the Ministry of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism / *Projet de loi 65, Loi visant à simplifier les processus gouvernementaux et à améliorer l'efficacité au ministère du Développement économique, du Commerce et du Tourisme*

Bill 66, An Act to simplify government processes and to improve efficiency in the Ministry of Environment and Energy / *Projet de loi 66, Loi visant à simplifier les processus gouvernementaux et à améliorer l'efficacité au ministère de l'Environnement et de l'Énergie*

Bill 68, An Act to simplify government processes and to improve efficiency in the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines / *Projet de loi 68, Loi visant à simplifier les processus gouvernementaux et à améliorer l'efficacité au ministère du Développement du Nord et des Mines*

Bill 69, An Act to simplify government processes and to improve efficiency in the Ministry of the Solicitor General and the Ministry of Correctional Services / *Projet de loi 69, Loi visant à simplifier les processus gouv-*

ernementaux et à améliorer l'efficacité au ministère du Solliciteur général et au ministère des Services correctionnels

Bill 120, An Act to reduce red tape by amending the Mining Act / Projet de loi 120, Loi visant à réduire les formalités administratives en modifiant la Loi sur les mines

Bill 139, An Act to promote the conservation of fish and wildlife through the revision of the Game and Fish Act / Projet de loi 139, Loi visant à promouvoir la protection du poisson et de la faune en révisant la Loi sur la chasse et la pêche

Bill 150, An Act proclaiming United Empire Loyalists' Day / Projet de loi 150, Loi proclamant le jour des Loyalistes de l'Empire-Uni

Bill 164, An Act to implement job creation measures and other measures contained in the 1997 Budget and to make other amendments to statutes administered by the Ministry of Finance or relating to taxation matters / Projet de loi 164, Loi visant à mettre en oeuvre des mesures de création d'emplois et d'autres mesures mentionnées dans le budget de 1997 et à apporter d'autres modifications à des lois dont l'application relève du ministère des Finances ou qui traitent de questions fiscales

Bill 170, An Act to amend the Milk Act / Projet de loi 170, Loi modifiant la Loi sur le lait

Bill 172, An Act to amalgamate The Toronto Hospital and The Ontario Cancer Institute and to amend the Cancer Act / Projet de loi 172, Loi visant à fusionner l'Hôpital de Toronto et l'Institut ontarien du cancer et à modifier la Loi sur le cancer

Bill Pr89, An Act respecting the City of Brampton

Bill Pr91, An Act respecting The London Community Foundation

Bill Pr94, An Act respecting The Jamaican Canadian Association

Bill Pr95, An Act respecting Institute for Advanced Judaic Studies.

1800

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): In Her Majesty's name, the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor doth assent to these bills.

Au nom de Sa Majesté, l'honorable lieutenant-gouverneure sanctionne ces projets de loi.

The Speaker: May it please Your Honour, we, Her Majesty's most dutiful and faithful subjects, the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, in session assembled, approach Your Honour with sentiments of unfeigned devotion and loyalty to Her Majesty's person and government and humbly beg to present for Your Honour's acceptance a bill entitled An Act to authorize the payment of certain amounts for the Public Service for the fiscal year ending on March 31, 1998.

Clerk of the House: Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor doth thank Her Majesty's dutiful and loyal subjects, accept their benevolence and assent to this bill in Her Majesty's name.

Son Honneur la lieutenant-gouverneure remercie les beaux et loyaux sujets de Sa Majesté, accepte leur

bienveillance et sanctionne ce projet de loi au nom de Sa Majesté.

Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor was pleased to deliver the following speech.

PROROGATION SPEECH

DISCOURS DE PROROGATION

Hon Hilary M. Weston (Lieutenant Governor): Mr Speaker, members of the Legislative Assembly, ladies and gentlemen, two and one half years ago, my predecessor sat in this chair and delivered a speech which marked the beginning of a new Parliament and a new government for Ontarians.

At that time, the new government reaffirmed its commitment to the goals of the Common Sense Revolution: cutting taxes to create jobs; eliminating government waste; removing barriers to economic growth; doing better for less; and balancing the budget.

Today, Ontarians can look back with satisfaction on the hard work of everyone towards realizing those goals, as the province follows a plan for opportunity, growth, and job creation.

Ontario is indeed a much better place today. No longer is the status quo of high taxes and high deficits threatening the future prosperity of our province.

The government has delivered on its pledge to cut personal income tax rates.

Three reductions have been made so far, and the next is scheduled for January 1.

The government knew that by giving Ontarians more of their own money to spend, save, or invest, those dollars would create tens of thousands of jobs. And the people of Ontario have done just that.

L'économie de l'Ontario a procédé à la création de plus de 200 000 nouveaux emplois net dans le secteur privé au cours des neuf dernières mois seulement.

Those jobs have been created thanks to Ontarians who are buying things such as homes, cars, furniture and clothing.

The proof is in the numbers: housing starts are up 29% over 1996. Auto sales are up 18%. Department store sales are up nearly 12%, compared to one year ago.

But those extra dollars in Ontarians' pockets are only one component of the economic engine that Ontario has become once again. Another major component is the government's commitment to reduce barriers to economic growth, barriers that once stood in the way of new investment and job creation.

As promised, the employer health tax on payrolls is being reduced, and eliminated completely for small businesses and entrepreneurs, who are Ontario's main job creators. By 1999, the first \$400,000 in payroll will be exempt from this job-killing tax.

Balance and stability have been restored to labour relations. An added benefit is that workers now have the right to a secret ballot when deciding whether they wish to be represented by a union in the workplace.

Legislation that imposed unfair and discriminatory job quotas has been repealed.

Hydro rates have been frozen.

One thousand, five hundred unnecessary government regulations are being eliminated, further reducing the burden of red tape on business.

Banks that invest in small businesses now receive a tax credit that offsets, at least in part, the increase in their capital taxes.

As promised, workers' compensation has been reformed. The new Workplace Safety and Insurance Board is focused on injury prevention and getting injured workers back to work safely and quickly.

Workers' compensation premiums will be cut by 5% effective January 1.

These reforms will ensure that help and support are still there for injured workers, while keeping a lid on premiums that would otherwise hurt job creation.

The government has also been getting its own house in order. Two and a half years ago, government was spending about 1.2 million more tax dollars each and every hour than it was taking in. The public debt was approaching \$100 billion.

Not only does a burden of debt divert dollars from programs, it is a serious threat to our economy's ability to attract investment and, more importantly, to our children's future.

The immediate priority simply had to be to stop adding \$11 billion annually to this mountain of debt. The government moved swiftly to get government spending under control. Internal government administration costs have been reduced by one third. The size of the civil service has been reduced.

Through prudent and cautious management, the government has reduced the provincial deficit, or negative cash flow, from over \$11 billion to less than \$6 billion. Obviously, much work is still required.

However, the government is on track to move into a positive cash flow position by the fiscal year 2000-2001 — exactly as it promised to do.

And just as the government has moved to guarantee the economic security of Ontario, it has recognized the right of all Ontarians to feel physically safe in their homes and on their streets.

The government has taken action in many ways, by bringing strict discipline for young offenders, tougher parole rules, and a Crime Control Commission that will let Ontarians take back their streets.

The government kept its promise to pass the country's most comprehensive Victims' Bill of Rights, to ensure that victims receive the support and respect they deserve.

At the same time as we are working to restore Ontarians' faith that government can and will live up to its promises, we are finding new ways to make the most of the hard-earned dollars Ontarians hand over to their government.

We began right here in this place. As promised, legislation has been passed that will reduce the number of

seats in the Ontario Legislature from 130 to 103, for the next election.

To set the right leadership example, members' pay has been reduced 5%, and tax-free allowances and the gold-plated pension plan have been eliminated from June 8th, 1995, onward.

We have made difficult choices, choices that were necessary to protect Ontario's priorities, priorities like health care.

The government pledged to maintain health care funding at no less than \$17.4 billion a year, and it has done so. In fact, this year, health care spending is at the highest level in the province's history.

Restructuring in health care is also well under way, restructuring that has enabled the government to reinvest more than \$1.3 billion in services that directly benefit Ontarians closer to where they live.

Ontario is on course to a modern, comprehensive, integrated health care system.

L'Ontario tient également à concrétiser ses objectifs dans le secteur de l'éducation. Nous voulons que notre système scolaire atteigne le nombre de rendements le plus élevé de toutes les provinces canadiennes.

For many years, various commissions, studies, and many Ontarians have demanded education reform that allows our children to be among the highest achievers in Canada. That would put education dollars back into the classroom where they belong, and make the system more accountable to parents and taxpayers.

The government has responded to those concerns, by introducing improvements such as a standard report card, a clearer, tougher math and language curriculum for elementary students, and standardized testing.

A College of Teachers has been established to set and enforce rigorous standards for teachers.

To free up dollars that are needed in the classroom, the government has passed legislation to reduce the number of school boards from 129 to 72, reduce the number of trustees by almost two thirds, and cap trustee salaries.

To put a stop to spiralling class sizes, legislation has been passed that will cap average class sizes at 22 for secondary students and 25 for elementary students.

Secondary teachers will spend an extra 30 minutes each day teaching in the classroom.

Elementary students will get an extra week of instruction every year, secondary students an extra two weeks.

Where deemed appropriate by local school boards, experts will be allowed to complement our excellent teachers in the classroom. And more control will be going to parents, through a school council at each and every school.

Ontarians have long demanded that government take the necessary steps to turn around a system that has not been serving our children as well as it should into one that will better prepare them to seize the opportunities that await them in the future. This government is acting on those demands.

Municipal reform is another call that had gone unanswered for many years. The relationship — or should I say the many relationships — between the provincial government and municipalities had been too complicated, too confusing and too costly for too many years.

Thanks to the Who Does What exercise, overlap and duplication between the two levels of government have been reduced, allowing for more effective and better services by both the municipal and provincial levels of government, and the ability to do so at less cost.

Welfare was another area calling out for change. In June of 1995, one in 10 Ontarians was trapped in a dead end on welfare. Thanks to the government's reforms, more than a quarter of a million people have broken out of the welfare trap in the last two and a half years.

For those who remain in the system, work for welfare is providing new purpose and hope. The program is spreading across the province, with over 126,000 people participating in workfare projects in over 50 communities.

While they look for permanent employment, those 126,000 citizens are building up their personal work experience and helping their communities.

At the same time that the government ensures that a permanent foundation for jobs and prosperity is in place for our children tomorrow, it continues to work to improve their comfort today.

Innovative ideas like the Ontario Breakfast for Learning program are improving children's chances for success at school.

Healthy Babies, Healthy Children helps identify children at risk and provides them with needed community supports.

The preschool speech and language services for children program has doubled the number of children getting help with speech and language disorders.

And a minister without portfolio for children's issues has been appointed, guaranteeing our young people a strong voice as Ontario prepares for the future.

In September 1995, the government set out an ambitious agenda for reform.

Questions and suggestions have been met with an open door and an invitation to discuss any and all reasonable, workable, alternative means to arrive at the same, shared goals.

The government committed in the Common Sense Revolution to remain open to discussion about how to reach its goals. That openness and willingness to listen will continue as the government continues to implement and manage the changes it pledged to make.

Again I look back to my predecessor's speech of September 1995, at which time he said, "Your government is doing what it said it would do, and it will continue."

Il s'agit là d'un engagement que le gouvernement réitère tous les jours à tous les Ontariens et Ontariennes.

Cet engagement s'exprime toujours avec les mêmes mots : «mais l'Ontario d'aujourd'hui a accompli beaucoup de progrès.»

Ontarians are going back to work, they have more to spend, they can rely on schools to educate them, doctors to care for them and police to protect them. And, for the first time in many years, they can look forward to a brighter future. The real heroes over the past two and a half years have been ordinary Ontarians who have worked so hard, day in and day out, to put Ontario back on the road to prosperity.

People like Peggy DeGraw of Blenheim, whose workfare experience has seen her working as a tutor helping adult students learn to read and write. She says, "I don't think there are a lot of programs out there that help people the way this one does."

People like Gerry McElroy of Oakville, who said, "It seems to me that a government 'living within its means' and still providing quality service is doing the right thing."

People like Amir Bem of MPX Data Systems, who said: "My company is growing and I am hiring more people. I would not have done so if I lived in a place where the government continued to spend my children's money into oblivion."

Ontario has come a long way over the past two and a half years — from the verge of bankruptcy under the former governments to leading Canada in jobs and opportunity.

As the province sets out on the next part of that journey to a brighter future, it is clear that challenges await.

But the journey begins with much better preparation to meet those challenges than Ontario had just two and half years ago.

Our energy is restored, our burden is lighter, the wind is at our back, and the road rises to meet us.

The government wishes to thank all members of all parties in this, the 36th Parliament, for their cooperation, advice, and commitment to a better Ontario.

The government also wishes to thank all of its partners — municipalities, school boards, agencies and commissions, hospitals and colleges and universities — for their commitment and support for a better Ontario.

Many individuals have also made contributions to assist the government in working more effectively and efficiently. For all of this help and goodwill, the government is truly appreciative.

Je tiens à exprimer mes meilleurs vœux à tous les membres de l'Assemblée législative et à leur famille à l'occasion des fêtes. Puisse la nouvelle année vous apporter la santé et le bonheur.

In our sovereign's name, I thank you.

Je déclare cette session prorogée.

I now declare this session prorogued.

Her Honour was then pleased to retire.

The House prorogued at 1823.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneure: Hon / L'hon Hilary M. Weston

Speaker / Président: Hon / L'hon Chris Stockwell

Clerk / Greffier: Claude L. DesRosiers

Clerk Assistant / Greffière adjointe: Deborah Deller

Clerks at the Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member / Député(e)	Constituency / Circonscription	Party / Parti	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Arnott, Ted	Wellington	PC	parliamentary assistant (small business) to the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism / adjoint parlementaire (secteur petites entreprises) du ministre du Développement économique, du Commerce et du Tourisme
Baird, John R.	Nepean	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance / adjoint parlementaire du ministre des Finances
Barrett, Toby	Norfolk	PC	
Bartolucci, Rick	Sudbury	L	
Bassett, Hon / L'hon Isabel	St Andrew-St Patrick	PC	Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation / ministre des Affaires civiques, de la Culture et des Loisirs
Beaubien, Marcel	Lambton	PC	
Bisson, Gilles	Cochrane South / -Sud	ND	deputy New Democratic Party House leader / chef parlementaire adjoint du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Boushy, Dave	Sarnia	PC	
Boyd, Marion	London Centre / -Centre	ND	
Bradley, James J.	St Catharines	L	deputy opposition leader, opposition House leader / chef adjoint de l'opposition, chef parlementaire de l'opposition
Brown, Jim	Scarborough West / -Ouest	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Correctional Services / adjoint parlementaire du ministre des Services correctionnels
Brown, Michael A.	Algoma-Manitoulin	L	deputy opposition whip / whip adjoint de l'opposition
Caplan, David	Oriole	L	
Carr, Gary	Oakville South / -Sud	PC	
Carroll, Jack	Chatham-Kent	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Community and Social Services / adjoint parlementaire de la ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
Castrilli, Annamarie	Downsview	L	
Christopherson, David	Hamilton Centre / -Centre	ND	
Chudleigh, Ted	Halton North / -Nord	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Natural Resources / adjoint parlementaire du ministre des Richesses naturelles
Churley, Marilyn	Riverdale	ND	Deputy Speaker and Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Vice-Présidente de la Chambre et Présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Cleary, John C.	Cornwall	L	
Clement, Hon / L'hon Tony	Brampton South / -Sud	PC	Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports
Colle, Mike	Oakwood	L	
Conway, Sean G.	Renfrew North / -Nord	L	
Cordiano, Joseph	Lawrence	L	
Crozier, Bruce	Essex South / -Sud	L	
Cullen, Alex	Ottawa West / -Ouest	L	
Cunningham, Hon / L'hon Dianne	London North / -Nord	PC	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for women's issues / ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales, ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Curling, Alvin	Scarborough North / -Nord	L	deputy opposition House leader / chef parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition
Danford, Harry	Hastings-Peterborough	PC	parliamentary assistant (Agriculture and Food) to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / adjoint parlementaire (secteurs Agriculture et Alimentation) du ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales

Member / Député(e)	Constituency / Circonscription	Party / Parti	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
DeFaria, Carl	Mississauga East / -Est	PC	
Doyle, Ed	Wentworth East / -Est	PC	deputy government whip / whip adjoint du gouvernement
Duncan, Dwight	Windsor-Walkerville	L	
Ecker, Hon / L'hon Janet	Durham West / -Ouest	PC	Minister of Community and Social Services / ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
Elliott, Brenda	Guelph	PC	
Eves, Hon / L'hon Ernie L.	Parry Sound	PC	Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance / vice-premier ministre, ministre des Finances
Fisher, Barbara	Bruce	PC	parliamentary assistant (Rural Affairs) to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / adjointe parlementaire (secteur Affaires rurales) du ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Flaherty, Hon / L'hon Jim	Durham Centre / -Centre	PC	Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail
Ford, Douglas B.	Etobicoke-Humber	PC	assistant deputy government whip / whip adjoint suppléant du gouvernement
Fox, Gary	Prince Edward-Lennox-South Hastings / Prince Edward- Lennox-Hastings-Sud	PC	
Froese, Tom	St Catharines-Brock	PC	parliamentary assistant (colleges and universities) to the Minister of Education and Training / adjoint parlementaire (secteur collèges et universités) du ministre de l'Éducation et de la Formation
Galt, Doug	Northumberland	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Minister of the Environment / adjoint parlementaire du ministre de l'Environnement
Gerretsen, John	Kingston and The Islands / Kingston et Les Îles	L	chief opposition whip / whip en chef de l'opposition
Gilchrist, Steve	Scarborough East / -Est	PC	parliamentary assistant (Municipal affairs – urban) to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / adjoint parlementaire (Affaires municipales – secteur urbain) du ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Grandmaître, Bernard	Ottawa East / -Est	L	
Gravelle, Michael	Port Arthur	L	
Grimmett, Bill	Muskoka-Georgian Bay / Muskoka-Baie-Georgienne	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / adjoint parlementaire du président du Conseil de gestion
Guzzo, Garry J.	Ottawa-Rideau	PC	
Hampton, Howard	Rainy River	ND	Leader of the New Democratic Party / chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Hardeman, Ernie	Oxford	PC	parliamentary assistant (Municipal affairs – rural) to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / adjoint parlementaire (Affaires municipales – secteur rural) du ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Harnick, Hon / L'hon Charles	Willowdale	PC	Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs / procureur général, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones
Harris, Hon / L'hon Michael D.	Nipissing	PC	Premier and President of the Executive Council / premier ministre et président du Conseil exécutif
Hastings, John	Etobicoke-Rexdale	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Transportation / adjoint parlementaire du ministre des Transports
Hodgson, Hon / L'hon Chris	Victoria-Haliburton	PC	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Northern Development and Mines, deputy government House leader / Président du Conseil de gestion, ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines, vice- leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Hoy, Pat	Essex-Kent	L	
Hudak, Tim	Niagara South / -Sud	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health / adjoint parlementaire de la ministre de la Santé
Jackson, Hon / L'hon Cameron	Burlington South / -Sud	PC	Minister without Portfolio (seniors Issues) / ministre sans portefeuille (affaires des personnes âgées)
Johns, Helen	Huron	PC	parliamentary assistant (Energy) to the Minister of Energy, Science and Technology / adjointe parlementaire (secteur Énergie) du ministre de l'Énergie, des Sciences et de la Technologie
Johnson, Bert	Perth	PC	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier Vice-Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative

Member / Député(e)	Constituency / Circonscription	Party / Parti	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Johnson, Hon / L'hon David	Don Mills	PC	Minister of Education and Training / ministre de l'Éducation et de la Formation
Johnson, Ron	Brantford	PC	
Jordan, W. Leo	Lanark-Renfrew	PC	parliamentary assistant (Tourism) to the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism / adjoint parlementaire (secteur Tourisme) du ministre du Développement économique, du Commerce et du Tourisme
Kells, Morley	Etobicoke-Lakeshore	PC	
Kennedy, Gerard	York South / -Sud	L	
Klees, Frank	York-Mackenzie	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Community and Social Services / adjoint parlementaire de la ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
Kormos, Peter	Welland-Thorold	ND	
Kwinter, Monte	Wilson Heights	L	
Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Prescott and Russell / Prescott et Russell	L	
Lankin, Frances	Beaches-Woodbine	ND	chief New Democratic Party whip / whip en chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Laughren, Floyd	Nickel Belt	ND	
Leach, Hon / L'hon Al	St George-St David	PC	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Leadston, Gary L.	Kitchener-Wilmot	PC	assistant deputy government whip / whip adjoint suppléant du gouvernement
Lessard, Wayne	Windsor-Riverside	ND	
Marchese, Rosario	Fort York	ND	
Marland, Hon / L'hon Margaret	Mississauga South / -Sud	PC	Minister without Portfolio (children's issues) / ministre sans portefeuille (enfance)
Martel, Shelley	Sudbury East / -Est	ND	
Martin, Tony	Sault Ste Marie	ND	deputy New Democratic Party whip / whip adjoint du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Martiniuk, Gerry	Cambridge	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Attorney General/ adjoint parlementaire du procureur général
Maves, Bart	Niagara Falls	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Labour / adjoint parlementaire du ministre du Travail
McGuinty, Dalton	Ottawa South / -Sud	L	Leader of the Opposition / chef de l'opposition
McLean, Allan K.	Simcoe East / -Est	PC	
McLeod, Lyn	Fort William	L	
Miclash, Frank	Kenora	L	deputy opposition whip./ whip adjoint de l'opposition
Morin, Gilles E.	Carleton East / -Est	L	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième Vice-Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Munro, Julia	Durham-York	PC	
Murdoch, Bill	Grey-Owen Sound	PC	
Mushinski, Marilyn	Scarborough-Ellesmere	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Premier / adjointe parlementaire du premier ministre
Newman, Dan	Scarborough Centre / -Centre	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health / adjoint parlementaire de la ministre de la Santé
North, Peter	Elgin	Ind	
O'Toole, John R.	Durham East / -Est	PC	
Ouellette, Jerry J.	Oshawa	PC	
Palladini, Hon / L'hon Al	York Centre / -Centre	PC	Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism / ministre du Développement économique, du Commerce et du Tourisme
Parker, John L.	York East / -Est	PC	parliamentary assistant to the minister responsible for native affairs / adjoint parlementaire du ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones
Patten, Richard	Ottawa Centre / -Centre	L	
Pettit, Trevor	Hamilton Mountain	PC	
Phillips, Gerry	Scarborough-Agincourt	L	
Pouliot, Gilles	Lake Nipigon / Lac-Nipigon	ND	
Preston, Peter L.	Brant-Haldimand	PC	

Member / Député(e)	Constituency / Circonscription	Party / Parti	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Pupatello, Sandra	Windsor-Sandwich	L	
Ramsay, David	Timiskaming	L	
Rollins, E.J. Douglas	Quinte	PC	
Ross, Lillian	Hamilton West / -Ouest	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations / adjointe parlementaire du ministre de la Consommation et du Commerce
Runciman, Hon / L'hon Robert W.	Leeds-Grenville	PC	Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services / solliciteur général et ministre des Services correctionnels
Ruprecht, Tony	Parkdale	L	
Sampson, Hon / L'hon Rob	Mississauga West / -Ouest	PC	Minister without Portfolio (Privatization) / ministre sans portefeuille (Privatisation)
Saunderson, William	Eglinton	PC	
Sergio, Mario	Yorkview	L	
Shea, Derwyn	High Park-Swansea	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation / adjoint parlementaire de la ministre des Affaires civiques, de la Culture et des Loisirs
Sheehan, Frank	Lincoln	PC	
Silipo, Tony	Dovercourt	ND	deputy New Democratic Party leader / chef adjoint du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Skarica, Toni	Wentworth North / -Nord	PC	
Smith, Bruce	Middlesex	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education and Training / adjoint parlementaire du ministre de l'Éducation et de la Formation
Snobelen, Hon / L'hon John	Mississauga North / -Nord	PC	Minister of Natural Resources / ministre des Richesses naturelles
Spina, Joseph	Brampton North / -Nord	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines / adjoint parlementaire du ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Sterling, Hon / L'hon Norman W.	Carleton	PC	Minister of the Environment, government House leader / ministre de l'Environnement, leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Stewart, R. Gary	Peterborough	PC	assistant deputy government whip / whip adjoint suppléant du gouvernement
Stockwell, Hon / L'hon Chris	Etobicoke West / -Ouest	PC	Speaker / Président
Tascona, Joseph N.	Simcoe Centre / -Centre	PC	
Tilson, David	Dufferin-Peel	PC	
Tsubouchi, Hon / L'hon David H.	Markham	PC	Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations / ministre de la Consommation et du Commerce
Turnbull, Hon / L'hon David	York Mills	PC	Minister without portfolio, chief government whip / ministre sans portefeuille, whip en chef du gouvernement
Vankoughnet, Bill	Frontenac-Addington	PC	
Villeneuve, Hon / L'hon Noble	S-D-G & East Grenville / S-D-G et Grenville-Est	PC	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, minister responsible for francophone affairs / ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales, ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones
Wettlaufer, Wayne	Kitchener	PC	
Wildman, Bud	Algoma	ND	New Democratic Party House leader / chef parlementaire du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Wilson, Hon / L'hon Jim	Simcoe West / -Ouest	PC	Minister of Energy, Science and Technology / ministre de l'Énergie, des Sciences et de la Technologie
Witmer, Hon / L'hon Elizabeth	Waterloo North / -Nord	PC	Minister of Health / ministre de la Santé
Wood, Bob	London South / -Sud	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Solicitor General / adjoint parlementaire du solliciteur général
Wood, Len	Cochrane North / -Nord	ND	
Young, Terence H.	Halton Centre / -Centre	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance / adjoint parlementaire du ministre des Finances

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Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Gary Fox
Alvin Curling, Carl DeFaria, Gary Fox, Ernie Hardeman,
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Lillian Ross, Tony Silipo, Joseph N. Tascona, David Tilson
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Ombudsman

Chair / Président: Marcel Beaubien
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Allan K. McLean, John L. Parker, Trevor Pettit,
Sandra Papatello, Bill Vankoughnet, Len Wood
Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

Ontario Hydro nuclear affairs / Affaires nucléaires d'Ontario Hydro

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Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Monte Kwinter
Sean G. Conway, Barbara Fisher, Doug Galt,
Helen Johns, Monte Kwinter, Floyd Laughren,
John R. O'Toole, Derwyn Shea
Clerk / Greffière: Donna Bryce

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Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Richard Patten
Marcel Beaubien, Gary Fox, Bernard Grandmaître,
Jean-Marc Lalonde, Shelley Martel, Richard Patten,
Peter L. Preston, Joseph N. Tascona, Terence H. Young
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Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Dave Boushy
Toby Barrett, Dave Boushy, David Caplan,
Ernie Hardeman, Gary L. Leadston, Tony Martin,
Tony Ruprecht, Derwyn Shea, Frank Sheehan,
Clerk / Greffier: Tom Prins

Resources development / Développement des ressources

Chair / Présidente: Brenda Elliott
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Peter L. Preston
David Christopherson, Ted Chudleigh, Sean G. Conway,
Brenda Elliott, Doug Galt, John Hastings, Pat Hoy,
Bart Maves, Peter L. Preston
Clerk / Greffière: Donna Bryce

Social development / Affaires sociales

Chair / Présidente: Annamarie Castrilli
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Dwight Duncan
Marion Boyd, Jack Carroll, Annamarie Castrilli,
Dwight Duncan, Tim Hudak, Frank Klees,
Lyn McLeod, John L. Parker, Bruce Smith
Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

These lists appear in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month. A list arranged by riding appears when space permits.

Ces listes figurent dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et du premier lundi de chaque mois. Par contre, une liste des circonscriptions paraît si l'espace est disponible.

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